

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

August 4, 2025

The regular 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 Freeman presiding. The meeting convened at 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Freeman advised all in attendance that comment cards are provided for anyone who wishes to speak during the Public Comment portion of the meeting. The comment cards may be completed during the meeting if anyone decides to speak regarding an agenda item the Commissioners are discussing. No further questions or comments will be entertained once the item is closed, except for the meeting's Public Comment period.

Mayor Freeman stressed that attendees are expected to behave respectfully or risk being escorted from the building by the police.

INVOCATION

Father Gregory Koon – St. Alban's Anglican Church

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Mayor Freeman

ROLL CALL

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

STAFF PRESENT

Bill Lawrence, Town Manager; Thad Carroll, Growth Management Director; Becky Higgins, Senior Planner; Police Chief Steve Hunt, Lady Lake Police Department; Deputy Chief Jason Brough, Lady Lake Police Department; Lieutenant Allen Greene, Lady Lake Police Department; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; Mike Burske, Parks and Recreation Director;

Tamika DeLee, Human Resources Director; Joella LeDonne, Finance Director; Aly Herman, Library Director; and Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk.

Town Attorney Taylor Tremel was also in attendance.

A. PROCLAMATIONS

1. Proclaiming August 1-7, 2025, as International Clown Week in Lady Lake

Mayor Freeman read the proclamation aloud and presented it to the representatives of Clown Ally 179.

CONSENT

1. July 21, 2025 – Special Conceptual Commission Meeting Minutes

2. July 21, 2025 – Town Commission Minutes

Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; Commissioner Roberts seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

B. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of Renewing the Lady Lake Chamber of Commerce Lease for the Log Cabin. (Mike Burske)

Parks and Recreation Director Mike Burske presented this agenda item stating that the Lady Lake Chamber of Commerce desires to renew its lease agreement with the town to rent the Log Cabin as their office. He stated that historically the lease was approved for two years and in 2024, the commission renewed the lease for one year.

Mayor Freeman inquired to the terms of the lease.

Mr. Burske stated that the Chamber rent is \$10.00 annually, and they pay the utilities.

Commissioner Sage confirmed with Mr. Burske that the log cabin is under the Parks and Recreation department and asked if he or his staff could utilize the building.

Mr. Burske stated if the Chamber relocates, the Events Coordinator Amy Alecia would utilize the log cabin.

Mayor Freeman inquired to the condition of the building and whether it requires renovations.

Mr. Burske stated that the building was renovated approximately ten years ago.

Commissioner Roberts confirmed with Mr. Burske that the town would benefit by utilizing the log cabin versus leasing it.

Mr. Burske replied affirmatively.

Commissioner Gourlie asked if there would be space available for the Events Coordinator at town hall when Growth Management moves to the library.

Mr. Lawrence advised that there would not be available space.

Commissioner Regan inquired as to how often the Chamber uses the building.

Mr. Burske advised that the Chamber of Commerce is at the building weekly, Monday – Friday.

Commissioner Sage stated that the town receives no revenue from the Chamber except the annual \$10.00 lease. He stated the log cabin would be better utilized by the Events Coordinator because of its proximity to Snooky Park.

Mayor Freeman inquired whether Ms. Alecia is agreeable to share the space with the Chamber.

Mr. Burske stated that he discussed this with Ms. Alecia and she stated that she did not wish to share the building.

Commissioner Roberts stated that she has been vocal about using public funds for private purposes and although the Chamber provides an important function, the needs of the town take priority.

A member of the Lady Lake Chamber of Commerce replied from the audience that she did not want to comment on this issue.

Commissioner Sage made a motion to deny renewing the Lady Lake Chamber Lease for the Log Cabin; Commissioner Roberts seconded. Motion failed 2-3 (Gourlie, Regan, Freeman).

Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to approve renewing the Lady Lake Chamber Lease for the Log Cabin; Commissioner Regan seconded. Motion passed 3-2 (Roberts, Sage).

2. Consideration of Approval to Purchase a 34-foot Panel Christmas Tree. (Mike Burske)

Parks and Recreation Director Mike Burske presented this agenda item stating that the Commission approved funding a 34-foot Panel Christmas Tree for Snooky Park in next year's budget. He stated that he would like to order the Christmas tree now so it arrives in time for the holidays. He presented several quotes and has not chosen a vendor.

Mayor Freeman inquired where the tree will be placed.

Mr. Burske stated that the Light Up Lady Lake event at the Log Cabin last year drew a few hundred people. The event will be moved to Snooky Park this year for safety purposes. The Christmas tree will be a focal point of the park at the tree lighting ceremony.

Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to approve the Purchase of a 34-foot Panel Christmas Tree; Commissioner Sage seconded; Motion passed 5-0.

3. FY 2025-2026 Benefits (Medical, Dental, Vision, Life Insurance, Long Term Disability, Short Term Disability, Critical Illness, Accident Coverage) (Tamika DeLee)

Human Resources Director Tamika DeLee presented this agenda item stating that these rates take effect October 1, 2025. She noted the following rates:

Health Insurance (Florida Blue-PRM) — 1.50% increase; one-year renewal employer paid benefit.

Dental Insurance (Florida Blue-PRM) — No Increase; one-year renewal employer paid benefit.

Employer Paid Life (The Standard-PRM) — Year three of a three-year rate guarantee employer paid benefit.

Voluntary Life (The Standard-PRM) — Year three of a three-year rate guarantee employee paid benefit.

Long Term Disability (The Standard-PRM) — Year three of a three-year rate guarantee employer paid benefit.

Short Term Disability (The Standard-PRM) — Year three of a three-year rate guarantee employee paid benefit.

Vision (EyeMed) — One year contract employee paid benefit.

Critical Illness — employee paid benefit.

Accident Coverage — employee paid benefit.

Commissioner Sage confirmed with Ms. DeLee these are the same benefits the employees are currently receiving and this is included in the FY 2025-2026 budget.

Commissioner Sage made a motion to approve the FY 2025-2026 Benefits as presented; Commissioner Roberts seconded; Motion passed 5-0.

4. Discussion and consensus of the Tentative Millage Rate and to Set Proposed Dates, Times, and Place for the First Public Hearing for the Tentative Millage Rate and Budget, and for the Second Hearing for the Final Millage Rate and Budget. (Joella LeDonne)

Finance Director Joella LeDonne presented this agenda item stating that the proposed millage rate for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 must be submitted to the property appraiser on Monday, August 4, 2025, along with the date, time, and place of the tentative millage rate and budget hearings. The proposed tentative millage rate approved can be increased or decreased on September 3, 2025, however on September 15, 2025, at the final public hearing, the tentative millage rate can be decreased but not increased. The current year's roll-back rate is 3.4273 mills. The proposed budget is based on 3.6510 mills, which is an increase of

6.53% on the current roll-back rate. Any millage rates up to 3.5819 would require at least three affirmative votes of the total Town Commission. A rate of 3.9401 mills would require a two-thirds vote or four affirmative votes of the Town. These votes are based on the total membership of the Town Commission rather than the membership present at the meeting.

The Town's two public hearings cannot conflict with Lake County or Lake County School Board public hearings. The tentative dates for Lake County are September 9, 2025, and September 23, 2025. The Lake County School Board met on July 28, 2025, and is scheduled to meet again on September 8, 2025. The hearings cannot start before 5 p.m.

Commissioner Sage inquired if cameras for Snooky Park and Guava Street Sports Complex that were removed from the budget had been added back.

Mr. Lawrence stated that several items needed to be removed from the budget to keep the same millage rate as 2024. Those items, Toughbook Laptops (police), one police vehicle, the proposed dog park, the town signs, and the Guava Street Sports Complex security cameras may be presented to the commission later in the year as a budget adjustment when the final figures are received at the end of this year.

Commissioner Roberts stated that she is not in favor of increasing the mil rate and prefers to wait to amend the budget later in the year.

Commissioner Sage stated that he is also not in favor of increasing the mil rate. He stated that this is a security issue as he was in the area when there was a drive-by shooting.

Commissioner Roberts stated this was discussed at length at the budget workshop and it was decided to eliminate several items to balance the budget.

Commissioner Gourlie stated that he is not in favor of raising the millage rate and prefers to wait until the final figures are received. He added that the town has more police officers now that could patrol that area until such time as more cameras can be purchased.

Commissioner Regan stated that he is not in favor of raising the millage rate.

Commissioner Roberts made a motion to approve the Tentative Millage Rate and to Set Proposed Dates, Times, and Place for the First Public Hearing for the Tentative Millage Rate and Budget, and for the Second Hearing for the Final Millage Rate and Budget; Commissioner Sage seconded; Motion passed 5-0.

C. TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

1. Ordinance 2025-10 – Second and Final Reading – An Ordinance of the Town of Lady Lake, Lake County, Florida; Providing for a Text Amendment to the Town of Lady Lake Land Development Regulations (Ordinance No. 94-08) Chapter 8, Section 8-4, “Compliance

Required: Exemptions”; Chapter 8, Section 8-6, “Submitting and Processing Subdivision Applications”; and, Chapter 8, Section 8-7, “Procedure and Requirements for Recording the Final Plat”; Providing for Severability; Providing for Codification; and Providing an Effective Date. (Thad Carroll)

Growth Management Director Thad Carroll presented a slide summarizing Senate Bill 784 (SB 784) that was signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis on June 20, 2025. This piece of legislation fundamentally alters the process of how plats and replats are reviewed and approved by local governments. All plat and replat applications are now subject only to administrative review and approval by designated staff of the local government. Senate Bill 784 eliminates the requirement for public hearings or votes by elected or appointed boards for plat approval.

Senate Bill 784 (SB 784) went into effect on July 1, 2025. The amendments proposed by Ordinance 2025-10 will effectually modify the Town of Lady Lake Land Development Regulations, Chapter 8 to comply with the new law, limiting plat review and approval to an administrative process.

Mr. Carroll clarified further that the commission will no longer have the ability to comment and review plats as that will now be done administratively. No text changes have been made to the ordinance since its first reading on July 21, 2025. He advised that this ordinance did not go before the Planning and Zoning board for recommendation.

At the July 21, 2025, meeting, the Town Commission voted 5-0 to approve Ordinance 2025-10 upon First Reading.

Mayor Freeman inquired as to what issues the Planning and Zoning board would consider.

Mr. Carroll stated the P&Z board will continue to consider variances, annexations, and property rezoning.

Commissioner Roberts made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-10 on second and final reading; Commissioner Gourlie seconded.

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

Motion passed by a 5-0 vote.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Lawrence commended the department managers with their proposed budget presentations at the budget workshop.

MAYOR AND COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Sage stated that he talked with Mr. Carroll regarding impact fees and how the town may use the money to fund various projects. He stated that there is currently enough money in Impact Fees to purchase land for the proposed recreation center without financially affecting the taxpayers. He stated that there has not been any discussion about adjusting the impact fees since 2020. Due to the growth of Lady Lake and changes in the economy he suggested reviewing these rates to determine if they require adjusting.

Commissioner Roberts commended Finance Director Joella LeDonne with additional detail of the budget as it clarified the various line items and provided a good understanding as to how the funds are being spent. She commended the department managers as well for their budget presentations.

Commissioner Roberts read a prepared statement addressing the public comments made at the last two commission meetings regarding the Pride Month proclamation:

First of all, I was taught to embody my values, to live them and to demonstrate them. Those values are honesty, integrity, kindness, hard work, consideration and service to others, to name a few. I speak up today in opposition to the recent public comments and opinions regarding the proclamation issued for Pride month in June. The opinions given do not represent all of Lady Lake. I've had phone calls, emails, and texts of support for the proclamation over the past month. I speak not to condemn any of you who have spoken, or to attempt to change your minds or opinions, for you have the right to think be and act in any way you choose in this country, provided that you do not harm others and that you follow the adopted laws. That is the First Amendment that allows you that privilege.

I have demonstrated my belief in support of that Amendment. I have remained respectfully silent, as you had offered bigoted and sometimes hateful opinions that were directed at me in particular, and at the community of people identified as LGBTQ plus, which, by the way, is somewhere between 5% and 10% of the populations. Mr. Harsh called me out personally, by name, publicly and so I speak today so that you understand that my silence up to is point has not been because I agree with your statements or opinions. It is not guilt, nor is it shame. I am exactly who God meant me to be. Mr. Harsh professed to love everyone but hate the sinner, but you demonstrated that you did not. As recent as the last

commission meeting, you greeted all four of my male companions here up on the stage and ignored me and didn't even look at me. My silence to this point has been reverence for the rule of law. Anyone has the right to speak in our public forum. I will defend that right to the death. I served in the U.S. Army from 1982 to 2001. I was willing to put my life on the line to defend the American way of life and to secure our freedoms. As you can see, this upsets me. Furthermore, it is also clear to me that many of the people that spoke out did not even know what a proclamation was, nor had they read the one that they so oppose. So, I will define what a proclamation is first by what it is not. It is not a law. It is not an ordinance. It is not a suggested code of conduct and it most certainly is not a parade. It is not something that everyone must agree with nor abide by. So, I will define that:

A proclamation is on the other hand a public formal announcement often ceremonial, issued by a government official to recognize a specific event, cause or individual. It is not something that you need to rail against to get reversed. If you don't want to recognize Pride month, then don't. Don't pay any attention. That's your right.

What you've done instead, by your anger and vitriol, is show intolerance for a group of people who exist, whether you want them to or not. Further, I denounce the accusations by Mr. Dimry associating the LGBTQ+ community with minor attracted persons. I had to go look it up. It's pedophiles. And to call us a pedophile is a cheap and demeaning tactic and is unworthy of a faith leader. Additionally, regarding pride parades, highlighting the most extreme individuals and ginning up fear about it is equally unworthy. Some may be that way, but most are not. The vast majority of LGBTQ+ individuals are hardworking, caring, and productive members of our society. They are doctors and nurses, hospice and hospital workers, police and firefighters, teachers and custodians, factory workers, farmers, attorneys and accountants, scientists and researchers, office workers and entrepreneurs. You get the idea I hope. They are in all walks of life whether you are aware of it or not.

Commissioner Roberts read the following quote:

"Do not speak to me about your religion. First, show it to me in how you treat other people. Do not tell me how much you love your god show me how much you love all God's children. Do not preach to me of your passion for your faith, teach me through your compassion to your neighbors. In the end, I'm not as much interested in what you have to sell or tell as I am in how you choose to live and give."

Commissioner Robert ended her comments by saying that the LGBTQ+ agenda in America "... is a desire for a world that treats us with equality, with liberty and justice for all."

Mayor Freeman stated that he and Commissioner Roberts will attend the Florida League of Cities annual conference in Orlando, August 13-15.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Reverend Dr. Paul Harsh, First Baptist Church of Lady Lake

Dr. Harsh stated that the agenda notes that a speaker's three minute time limit is flexible at the discretion of the mayor, and that a speaker may speak on behalf of a group.

Dr. Harsh stated that he made no personal remarks and instead indicated that he was trying to uphold the integrity of God. He stated that in the past, he admired the level of integrity shown by who represented the town. He stated that he believes there is corruption that seeks to stifle public debate and seeks revenge on those who disagree. He stated that disagreement is not bigotry or hatred. He stated that his comments at the last two commission meetings were an explanation of his Christian beliefs with the stated intent as to why he is opposed position the commission made. Dr. Harsh stated that Ms. Roberts privately polled the town council to have him removed from the list of clergy persons who deliver the invocations at the commission meetings.

Commissioner Roberts stated that she did not discuss this with the commission. Mayor Freeman also stated that Commissioner Roberts did not discuss this.

Mary Sharpe, 212 Littler Lane, Lady Lake

Ms. Sharpe expressed her opposition to some of the biblical quotes stated during the Public Comment portion of the July 21, 2025, commission meeting. She stated that the commission meetings are business meetings, not church service. She expressed her support of the commissioners and the events the town provides.

James Oldham, 817 Bolivar St., Lady Lake

Mr. Oldham expressed his appreciation of the commission and his support of the Pride Month proclamation. He noted that the proclamation is not political, it is a statement of support for a group who are maligned by the uninformed among them.

Lissa Degnan, 2130 Yearling Way, The Villages

Ms. Degnan expressed her support of the Pride Month proclamation, adding that there is something wonderful about equality and the support for the LGBTQ community is heartwarming and wonderful thing to continue.

Mary Jane Klocke, 817 Bolivar St., Lady Lake

Ms. Klocke expressed her support for Pride Month proclamation, adding that Lady Lake is our government and it serves a broader civic purpose that embraces all citizens. It is a community of faith and fairness.

Jason Accurso, 428 Sierra Oak Cir., Lady Lake

Mr. Accurso stated that at the July 21 meeting he asked if the proclamation was official, was there vote and where he could find the vote.

Mayor Freeman stated that proclamations are not subject to a vote by the commission.

Mr. Lawrence stated that the commission is not required to answer any questions.

Marcy Novak, 436 Loma Paseo, Lady Lake

Ms. Novak expressed her support of the Pride Month proclamation. She stated that she was offended by comments that seemed to represent Christian viewpoint.

Lynn White, 869 Cortez Ave., Lady Lake

Ms. White expressed her support of the Pride Month proclamation, adding that all current and future Lady Lake residents deserve respect and dignity.

Debra Hobbs, 540 Loma Paseo Dr., Lady Lake

Ms. Hobbs expressed her support of the Pride Month proclamation, adding that those who spoke against the proclamation did not represent the view of many people who live in Lady Lake.

Ruth Kussard, 424 Loma Paseo, Lady Lake

Ms. Kussard expressed her support of the Pride Month proclamation quoting the proclamation in part, "... Lady Lake denounces prejudice, unfair discrimination based on age, gender identity, gender expression, race, color, religion, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, or physical attributes as an affront to our fundamental principles...".

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

s/ Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk

s/ Ed Freeman, Mayor