

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

September 3, 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.

Mayor Freeman verified with Deputy Town Clerk Osborne that this meeting was properly noticed.

CALL TO ORDER

INVOCATION

Ellen Pollock – New Covenant United Methodist 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; Lieutenant Robert Tempesta, Lady Lake Police Department; Lieutenant Allen Greene, Lady Lake Police Department; Lieutenant James Dunagan, Lady Lake Police Department; Joella LeDonne, Finance Director; Brandi Carson, Assistant Finance Director; Aly Herman, Library Director; Elisha Poppacoda, Communications Director; Kathy Rosado, Town Clerk; and Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk.

Town Attorney Derek Schroth was also in attendance.

A. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Resolution 2025-106 – First and Final Reading – Adoption of Tentative Millage Rate for FY 2025-2026. (Joella LeDonne)

Finance Director Joella LeDonne stated that Res. 2025-106 sets the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 tentative property tax millage rate of 3.6510 mills per \$1,000 taxable valuation, which is 6.53% greater than the current year's rolled back rate of 3.4273.

Per State Statute Chapter 200.065, the Town of Lady Lake must hold a public hearing on the tentative millage rate and proposed budget. At this hearing, the Town Commission will discuss the tentative millage rate, and if changed, re-compute its tentative millage rate and publicly announce the percent, if any, by which the re-computed tentative millage is greater than or less than the rolled-back rate and approve the resolution.

As a reminder, the Town Commission can increase the millage rate at this meeting, but at the second public hearing on September 15th, the Town Commission will not be able to increase it from what was approved at this meeting. This tentative rate, plus any other rate below this rate, requires an affirmative vote of three members of the Town Commission.

The hearing was advertised via the TRIM notice mailed out by the Property Appraiser.

The fiscal impact is \$7,161,522.

Commissioner Roberts stated that it is a value that the public understand that the ad valorem taxes from Lady Lake is one portion of their tax bill and it is only 25.9% of our total budget. She stated that most of the remaining portion of our budget is from other sources. She stressed that this is not a percentage increase from last year nor is it a decrease. It is an increase because the rate was not rolled back, and all the new buildings are included in the calculation for how much the increase is over last year. She estimated that there has been \$25 million of new value constructed in the last year.

Mayor Freeman stated that the public finds the term, "rolled back rate", confusing. He stated the public would understand this more easily if it were mentioned that taxes have been reduced.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts and seconded by Commissioner Sage, the Commission approved the first and final reading of Resolution 2025-106, which sets the FY 2025-2026 tentative millage rate of 3.6510 mills per \$1,000 taxable valuation which is greater than the current year's rolled back rate of 3.4273 mills, by the following roll call vote:

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

Motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

2. Ordinance 2025-11 – First Reading – Adoption of Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. (Joella LeDonne)

Finance Director Joella LeDonne stated that Ord. 2025-11 sets the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 estimated revenues, expenditures, and expenses for the general fund, the special revenue fund, and utilities fund.

Per State Statute Chapter 200.065, the Town of Lady Lake must hold a public hearing on the tentative millage rate and proposed budget. At this hearing, the Town Commission will amend and approve the first reading of the budget ordinance after adoption of the tentative millage rate.

The hearing was advertised via the TRIM notice mailed out by the Property Appraiser.

The fiscal impact is \$37,116,027.

Mayor Freeman verified with Ms. LeDonne that the proposed budget includes the changes made at the budget workshop.

Commissioner Gourlie stated there is a proposal on the agenda to add two paid holidays for the employees and inquired if this is included in the budget.

Ms. LeDonne stated it is not in the budget.

Mr. Lawrence clarified that the employees' salaries have been calculated and are included in the budget. Approving two paid holidays will not negatively impact the budget as the funds. If the commission denies the proposed two paid holidays, they will be regular work days.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts and seconded by Commission Sage, the Commission approved the first reading of Ordinance 2025-11, by the following roll call vote:

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

Motion passed by a vote of 5-0

B. PROCLAMATION

1. Proclaiming September 17-25, 2025, as Constitution Week

Mayor Freeman read the proclamation aloud and presented it to members of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

C. CONSENT

1. August 18, 2025 – Town Commission Minutes

2. August 18, 2025 – Special Commission Conceptual Workshop Minutes

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

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of Approval to award a contract to M.T. Causley, LLC, providing for a contracted building official, building inspection services, building plan review, and related support services for the Town of Lady Lake. (Thad Carroll)

Growth Management Director Thad Carroll stated that the town's present firm, Charles Abbott, has had staffing issues and can no longer provide building inspection services to the town.

Mr. Carroll stated that he researched adjacent municipalities for the services being provided by third parties and found that M.T. Causley, who provided building inspection services to the town from 2016 to 2022, was currently in the area.

Mr. Carroll advised that due to time constraints he could not advertise for a Request for Proposal (RFP) for building services. In situations like this, piggybacking on an existing contract with a neighboring municipality is the most cost-effective approach. He stated that M.T. Causley has a contract with the City of Astatula. Mr. Carroll reviewed the rates of that

contract and found them to be comparable to the rates of the current contract with Charles Abbott.

Mr. Carroll reiterated that he has worked with M. T. Causley in the past and does not anticipate any loss of service when the new contract begins October 1, 2025.

Commissioner Regan inquired if Mr. Carroll was satisfied with their services.

Mr. Carroll replied affirmatively. He stated that the RFP process allows more time to review the details of each proposal that is received such as the number of employees, what services are provided, etc. He stated that the proposed contract with M. T. Causley includes building official, building inspection, and plan review, and will be utilizing the rates as specified in the contract written by the City of Astatula. He noted that he will not be utilizing the full contract as it includes permit tech services and the Growth Management department has permit techs on staff currently.

Commissioner Regan inquired if this will be an annual contract.

Mr. Carroll stated that the current contract expires in March 2026. If the City of Astatula renews the contract, the town would continue to piggyback on the contract. He stated that he will be on contact with the City of Astatula regarding this. If the City decides not to renew the contract, this will allow enough time to go through the RFP process.

Commissioner Roberts inquired to the average RFP timeframe.

Mr. Carroll stated it is approximately 75 to 90 days. The initial advertising is posted for approximately 30 days. Once the packets are received, a panel of four or five employees are chosen to review the material for approximately three weeks. The panel convenes, the proposals are ranked and a contractor is chosen. The chosen proposal is be presented to the commission for approval.

Commissioner Sage inquired if a building inspector is currently on staff.

Mr. Carroll replied negatively, adding that there had been a building official in-house, yet utilized a third party building inspector. Utilizing a third party contractor allows for multiple inspectors in the event one employee does not come to work one day, another is available to cover the shift.

Commissioner Sage inquired if a study was done regarding having a building official on staff with a vehicle versus contracting with a third party.

Mr. Carroll reiterated that there had been a building official on staff with all benefits. He stated that currently two employees would be required. Because this issue came up unexpectedly, he did not have the funds in his budget for an additional two employees with

full benefits and two vehicles. He stated that the developments under construction will be monitored to see the town's growth trend over the next year.

Commissioner Roberts made a motion to award a contract to M.T. Causley, LLC, providing for contracted building official, building inspection services, building plan review, and related support services for the Town of Lady Lake; Commissioner Sage seconded. Motion passed 5-0

2. Consideration of approval of the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Holiday Schedule. (Tamika DeLee/Bill Lawrence)

Human Resources Director Tamika DeLee stated that she is proposing adding two additional holidays to the schedule, Christmas Eve, December 24, and the federal holiday June 19, Juneteenth.

Commissioner Roberts made a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Holiday Schedule; Commissioner Regan seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

E. TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Town Attorney Derek Schroth stated that the town was invited by the law firm that is challenging Senate Bill 180 (SB 180), which is legislation that prohibits all local governments from enacting any restrictions or regulations that are more stringent on development. He stated that eight cities and two counties that have joined the lawsuit.

Attorney Schroth advised that the town does not need to join the lawsuit, yet it is the commission's decision. He stated that he will continue to monitor the case and update the commission as it moves through the courts.

Mayor Freeman stated that he has been asked by the offices of Representative Nan Cobb, Senator Keith Truenow to review SB 180 and provide comments.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Lawrence introduced the new Assistant Finance Director, Brandi Carson.

Mr. Lawrence stated there is a Special Commission meeting on September 11, 2025, at 5:30p.m. for purposes of passing the resolutions for the Fire Protection Assessment and the Solid Waste Assessment.

Mr. Lawrence announced the dates for upcoming events:

Father Daughter Dance - September 13, 2025

Spooky Park – October 18, 2025.

Boo Bash - October 25 (formerly Not-So-Scary Halloween)

Mr. Lawrence stated that 181 viewers have watched the meetings via Live Stream over the past four months.

Mr. Lawrence stated that County Commissioner Tim Morris met with him and the mayor to discuss county events, road infrastructure, growth and wastewater capacity. He stated that Commissioner Morris understands Lady Lake and supports the town. He stated he appreciates Commissioner Morris' efforts keeping in contact with him.

MAYOR AND COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Roberts stated that she attended the 2025 legislative meeting held by our Florida State House representatives. She stated that Representative Nan Cobb and Senator Truenow took part in facilitating the meeting.

Commissioner Roberts stated that County Commissioner Leslie Campion asked the legislative delegation for funds for roads in Lake County, and it was well-received.

Commissioner Roberts stated that many people addressed the delegation requesting their assistance for a variety of causes that are important to them. Many people are concerned about the environment.

Mayor Freeman stated that he will be attending the Florida League of Mayors meeting on September 17th. This is a two-day conference in Hollywood, FL.

Mayor Freeman stated that he and Town Manager Lawrence attended zoom meeting with a company that aides towns with various retail strategies and designing downtown areas.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Shawn Berry

Dr. Berry stated that he is a disabled veteran and a civil rights advocate. He stated the he is present to put the council notice. He stated that two citizens who have been banished from The Villages recently, one a disabled man in a wheelchair and the other a veteran who was praying. He stated that town officers issued trespass warnings to these individuals that equated to exile from the entire town of The Villages. He stated that the Florida Attorney General issued guidance for local governments who use trespass powers to push citizens from public streets and sidewalks. He warned that if a Lady Lake officer hands him one of these unlawful notices he will pursue federal action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

Attorney Schroth advised that although it appears to be public sidewalks or public rights-of-way in The Villages, it is The Villages that actually own a lot of those areas.

Attorney Schroth stated that Dr. Berry is correct in that if someone were to use their First Amendment right while standing on a town-owned sidewalk, that is a public forum. He stated that The Villages owns roads, buildings, sidewalks, and trees.

Attorney Schroth stated that he reviewed the video that Dr. Berry mentioned and found that the police officers acted appropriately.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

s/ Kathleen Rosado, Town Clerk

s/ Ed Freeman, Mayor