

MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION MEETING TOWN OF LADY LAKE, FLORIDA

March 20, 2023

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 Rietz presiding.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

INVOCATION

Pastor Jeff Hosmer – North Lake Presbyterian Church

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Mayor Rietz

ROLL CALL

Commissioner (Ward)	Present
Hannan (Four)	YES
Kussard (One)	YES
Gourlie (Two)	YES
Freeman (Three)	YES
Rietz (Five)	YES

STAFF PRESENT

Bill Lawrence, Town Manager; Julia Harris, Administrative Assistant; Elisa Pappacoda; Communications Director; Aly Herman, Library Director; Mike Burske, Parks & Recreation Director; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; Pam Winegardner, Finance Director; Rob Tempesta, Police Chief; Nancy Wilson, Town Clerk

Derek Schroth, Town Attorney was also in attendance.

A. PROCLAMATION

1. Proclamation Declaring March "Problem Gambling Awareness Month"

2. Proclamation Declaring April "Water Conservation Month"

Mayor Rietz read and signed both Proclamations declaring March as "Problem Gambling Awareness Month and April as "Water Conservation Month".

B. CONSENT

3. February 28, 2023 – Town Commission Workshop Minutes

4. March 6, 2023 – Town Commission Meeting Minutes

5. ~~Approval for Lady Lake First Baptist Church to Utilize the Log Cabin for a Concert on the Evening of April 7th at 7pm~~

6. Approval of Continuation of Utilizing Option B of the Interlocal Agreement with Lake County for Collection of Storm Debris from Streets and Right of Ways.

Parks and Recreation Director Burske asked for Item 5 of the Consent Agenda be pulled and to be considered under New Business, Item 7.

The Commission Consented to making the change.

Commissioner Kussard made a motion to approve items 3, 4 and 6 on the Consent Agenda as modified; Commissioner Hannan seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

C. NEW BUSINESS

7. (moved from Consent Agenda) Consideration of Approval for the First Baptist Church of Lady Lake to Host a Concert at the Log Cabin on the Evening of April 7th and April 21st at 7:00 pm

Mr. Burske said that since the agenda was published, he was asked by a representative of the First Baptist Church if they could utilize the Log Cabin on both April 7th and 21st instead of just the one day.

Commissioner Kussard made a motion to approve the use of the Log Cabin by the First Baptist Church to host a concert on the evenings of April 7th and April 21st at 7:00 p.m.; Commissioner Hannan seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

8. **Consideration of Granting a Partial Exemption for use of the Community Building by the Sunday Night AA Meeting Group**

Town Clerk Wilson said that one of the changes made to Ordinance 2023-01 regarding the Community Building, was to only allow full paying rentals on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays with a minimum of four-hour blocks. Also added to the Ordinance was a requirement that any

organization who wishes to receive a reduction or waiver of fees, must submit an application to the Commission for them to consider the benefit of that organization to the community.

Commissioner Kussard agreed that there is a definite need for Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and she supports their organization. However, you cannot reserve a room that is not available. Ordinance 2023-01 states that the Community Building cannot be booked for repeated use on Fridays, Saturdays and Sunday. Further, only those paying the full rental rate for a minimum of four hours are permitted to rent the building on Fridays through Sundays. She suggested other recreation centers that might be available in the area. In conclusion, Commissioner Kussard said she was not in favor of renting to them because it is not fair to other residents who would like to rent the building for special events and because we just adopted the ordinance stating that what the group is requesting, is not allowed.

Commissioner Gourlie suggested that the AA group could use the room on Sunday evenings if it is not already booked.

Commissioner Freeman said this whole issue started with the Community Building when Parks & Recreation Director Burske was tasked with the impossible task of making the Community Building break-even; very little in this Town breaks even except for the water and sewer departments. He also doubted that there would be much interest in holding an event on a Sunday evening. Administrative Assistant Harris said she is frequently asked to make bookings on Sundays but cannot do so because AA is utilizing the space. Commissioner Freeman said the group has met in the same location for 40 years and it is important where, when and with whom they meet. Moving to another location may be untenable to some members. He thinks they should be granted the partial exemption. In therapy environments, some people will only go to a certain location with a certain group of people. If they can't meet at 6:30 or 7:00pm on Sunday nights, we may lose some people who will return to their destructive habit.

Mayor Rietz said this is a difficult decision to make. He agreed with what Commissioner Kussard said since a deviation from how the ordinance reads (which was just adopted) would require a rewrite. He would like AA to find another place to meet. He knows the importance of AA and how valuable it is for a community but things happen and times change.

Mike Sage - 1144 West Boone Court

Mr. Sage stated that he is the treasurer of the group and has been attending meetings at the Community Building since 2006. He has attended that meeting every Sunday evening and many people have come into the meeting needing help because they know that at 6:30 p.m.

on a Sunday night, a meeting is being held on Guava Street. With AA, the location, day, and time of the meetings is very important. He said there are different locations they can use but in AA, the location of individual meetings is very important. They have been going to Guava Street for 40 years. There was a time when the library rented the Community Building and sometimes, they were given another room because the building was unavailable. If it is about the money, they could pay a little more. On Sunday night there were 32 people at the meeting more than half of whom were from Lady Lake. Two people came in that night who were in need of help. Mr. Sage pleaded with the Commission to reconsider and grant AA Sunday partial exemption.

Commissioner Kussard asked if they could join the Thursday evening group. Mr. Sage responded that a lot of people go to meetings every night. On Sundays, the meetings are held on Guava Street. This is known by the community; there is no point in having two different meeting locations in one area on the same night.

Phil Mathius – Lakes of Lady Lake

Mr. Mathius did not understand why the group could not use the building. He was told that the ordinance would need to be changed that was just adopted. Mr. Mathius suggested that something should be worked out with AA.

Mike Sage 1144 - West Boone Court

Mr. Sage said he served on the finance board when he lived in Connecticut, and nothing broke even. He queried how popular Sunday nights could possibly be at the Community Building. Mayor Rietz responded that we do not know because it has always been occupied by Mr. Sage's group. Mr. Sage said there is no hard data to determine how many times the building could have been rented or how many people actually request to rent the building on Sunday evenings. Mayor Rietz said we want it to be available for full paying renters for a minimum of four hours from Fridays thru Sundays. Town Manager Lawrence said he has worked elsewhere where rental buildings did break even so the taxpayers would not have to subsidize that activity. He added that the purpose of the ordinance is to attempt to break even by renting to full paying people on Fridays through Sundays.

Commissioner Freeman commented that breaking even is not realistic, nothing breaks even in government. He does think that anybody who has never been involved in group therapy can talk about whether it matters to have a set location or time; it does matter.

Brian Brady - 513 Bonita Drive

Mr. Brady, who attends the Sunday evening meetings, said he wanted to add that the AMA considers alcoholism a disease.

Commissioner Hannan made a motion to grant a partial exemption for use of the Community Building by the Sunday night AA meeting group; Commissioner Freeman seconded. Motion failed 2-3 (Rietz, Gourlie, Kussard)

9. Consideration of sending written approval to Lake County allowing them to move forward with a lease proposal with Verizon for carrier co-location at the communication tower facilities located at 1113 Teal Lane

In 2008, the Town of Lady Lake entered into an interlocal agreement with Lake County for a shared public service radio communications facility at 1113 Teal Lane (the Town owns the land and Lake County owns the communications tower). In 2012, the County requested written approval from the Town to allow a carrier (AT&T) co-location that included twelve antennas. In 2014, there was another request by the County to add six remote AT&T radio units to the tower. The Town Commission voted to approve both requests (2012 and 2014) and we are currently receiving \$3,212.78 rent per month from AT&T. The County is now requesting approval from the Commission to allow them to move forward with another carrier co-location agreement, this time with Verizon. Should the Commission vote to approve the request, the Town will receive \$1,250 per month from the Verizon lease.

Commissioner Hannan commented that the amount of compensation the Town is receiving is not enough.

Commissioner Kussard made a motion to send written approval to Lake County allowing them to move forward with a lease proposal with Verizon for carrier co-location at the communication tower facilities located at 1113 Teal Lane; Commissioner Gourlie seconded. Motion carried 4-1 (Hannan).

10. Consideration of Town Manager Lawrence's Employment Agreement and Salary Adjustment

Town Manager Lawrence's two-year employment agreement is due to expire on April 1, 2023. A new contract was provided to the Commission for review.

Commissioner Hannan said the new contract is for four years but he would like to see a two year contract like the one that is expiring. Mayor Rietz said the Commission can terminate the contract at any time. Also, the Town is in the process of having four-year terms for the Commission so we should be consistent.

Commissioner Kussard also thinks the Town Manager's contract should be four years because he can be terminated at any time. She added that when he was hired, we wanted somebody who would handle and solve problems, listen to staff, support activities that benefit the Town and keep the Commission informed. All of which he has done. Also, he should get the same pay increase as the employees. Commissioner Gourlie, Commissioner Freeman and Mayor Rietz agreed with Commissioner Kussard's assessment of the Town Manager.

Commissioner Kussard made a motion to approve Town Manager Lawrence's employment agreement as presented and to adjust his salary upward by 7%; Commissioner Freeman seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Lawrence thanked the Commission and added that the department heads have made him look good.

TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Mr. Schroth had nothing to report.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Lawrence introduced the new Communications Director, Elisha Pappacoda who was in attendance. He also thanked Library Director Aly Herman for driving up patronage counts at the library; Lady Lake Library is now number two in the county for patron usage.

MAYOR AND COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Hannan asked about having the library open on Saturdays as in the past. Library Director Herman said they would need to add two or three more staff members to reopen on Saturdays. Commissioner Kussard added that when the library was open on Saturdays, it was not busy, so they decided to close on that day and instead stay open on Monday nights.

Commissioner Kussard was glad to see all five Commissioners at the St. Patrick's Day event. She also asked if the Town was going to have a Water Conservation contest like in previous years. Public Works Director Eagle said there was not much interest in conducting a contest this year, but they will try again next year.

Commissioner Gourlie said at other venues, he has seen displays that show new products or services that will save water and electricity and asked if that is something the Town could do. Public Works Director Eagle responded that they have done that in the past and he will look into it for the future. Water conservation efforts require public outreach.

Commissioner Freeman said he met with Elisha, the new Communications Director, adding that she is delightful and will be a major asset to Lady Lake. Mayor Rietz agreed.

Mayor Rietz announced the upcoming Easter Egg hunt, the tree raffle where 25 people will be chosen by random drawing to receive a \$200 gift certificate to be used at a local nursery.

Commissioner Gourlie said he spoke to some police officers at the parade, and they expressed concerns about staffing. He suggested scheduling a workshop to discuss options to make things better for the police department especially how to attract more officers and review their starting salary.

Commissioner Hannan asked Chief Tempesta what he is doing to attract new officers. The Chief responded that they go to the different academies in the area for recruiting. They also post open positions on several police recruiting sites. There is a lot of competition in this market.

In response to Commissioner Gourlie's question about why they are having such a difficult time attracting new officers, Chief Tempesta answered it is because of low salaries. Chief said at a workshop, he would present starting salaries in other jurisdictions. Those starting out are attracted by higher salaries versus benefits.

Commissioner Hannan asked about advertising in the New York Times or other publications. He also asked if salary is the main problem to which the Chief responded that it is a problem but not necessarily the main problem. Commissioner Gourlie asked if the Chief has visited any military recruiting offices.

Commissioner Kussard said police recruiting is a management problem and the Commission is overstepping. If we do discuss the matter, it should be during budget discussions. Town Manager Lawrence said if salaries are renegotiated, the PBA contract would need to be reopened. He would need Commission permission and would have to ensure the PBA would agree to the renegotiations.

Commissioner Hannan said that if the PBA contract is renegotiated resulting in a salary increase, we will have to deal with compression issues. He is in favor of opening the contract as is Commissioner Gourlie who said it is a good first step in understanding why we are having trouble recruiting police officers.

Commissioner Kussard said she would like to find out what other agencies are paying their officers to determine if salaries are the problem or if there are other underlying conditions.

Commissioner Freeman asked if other police departments are having the same problem with recruitment as Lady Lake. Chief Tempesta said they are also having trouble filling positions and part of the reason is that people are jumping from agency to agency.

Town Manager Lawrence said a culmination of events has changed police officer recruitment over the last several years. Some of those events are people not wanting to work nights weekends, holidays, etc., media scrutiny and salaries.

There was Commission consensus to reopen the PBA contract for further discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Phil Mathius – Lakes of Lady Lake

Mr. Mathius agreed with reopening the PBA. The police officers' starting salary is too low.

He also said that Bill Lawrence is the best Town Manager since Jim Coleman, and he thinks he should receive a higher salary.

Mayor Rietz asked the Chief about the starting salary for a new officer; it is \$45,000/year. The starting pay for the Animal Control Officer is 50 cents per hour less.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.



Nancy Wilson, Town Clerk

Jim Rietz, Mayor