

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

February 2, 2026

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.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

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

STAFF PRESENT

Bill Lawrence, Town Manager; Kathy Rosado, Town Clerk; Thad Carroll, Growth Management Director; Becky Higgins, Senior Planner; Lady Lake Police Chief Steve Hunt; Lady Lake Deputy Police Chief Jason Brough; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; Joella LeDonne, Finance Director; Lori Crain, Senior Code Enforcement Officer; Tamika DeLee, Human Resources Director; and Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk.

3. INVOCATION

Led by Pastor Keith Johnson – Chapel of Christian Faith

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PROCLAMATION – Black History Month

The proclamation was read aloud by Mayor Ed Freeman.

5. CONSENT – (Public Comment Taken)

- a. Town Clerk – Approval of the Town Commission Meeting Minutes – January 5, 2026
- b. Town Clerk – Approval of the Town Commission Workshop Minutes – January 21, 2026

- c. **Growth Management** — Consideration of Approval of the First Amendment to the Proportionate Share Mitigation Agreement between the School Board of Lake County, Florida, the Town of Lady Lake, and Linden Street Development, LLC, for the Lady Lake Luxury Apartments. (Thad Carroll)
- d. **Town Clerk** — Reappointment of Three Planning and Zoning Advisory Board Members. (Kathy Rosado)

Commissioner Roberts pulled item d, regarding the reappointment of the Planning and Zoning Board members. She inquired if these positions were advertised.

Town Clerk Kathy Rosado explained that current board members are asked if they would like to be reappointed. Applications for boards are on the town's website.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts and seconded by Commissioner Sage, the Commission approved the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion carried 4-0.

6. NEW BUSINESS — (Public Comment Taken)

- 7. **Code Enforcement** — Consideration of Reduction of a Lien for Code Enforcement Case Number 20-7631, in the amount of \$41,550 for the Property Located at 218 Skyline Drive. Violation: Town of Lady Lake Code of Ordinances Section 7-27, Certain Conditions, Accumulations Deemed Public Nuisance; 7-46, Storage of Junk, etc., Prohibited. (Lori Crain)

Senior Code Enforcement Officer Lori Crain stated that Code Enforcement Case 20-7631 was opened on August 5, 2020, when the officer observed high grass, junk, brush pile, and two unlicensed, possibly inoperable vehicles on the property. The property owner at the time, Jeremiah Francisco, did not bring the property into compliance by the date set, and the case was presented to the Special Magistrate on December 17, 2020. An \$87 administrative fee was imposed, and a daily fine of \$25 commenced on January 22, 2021.

The Order of Fine hearing occurred on March 23, 2021, during which time, the Special Magistrate executed the fine and included the administrative fees and recording fees to be recorded as a lien against the property and the property owner. The \$25 daily fine would continue to accrue until complete compliance is obtained. The lien was recorded in Lake County on May 4, 2021, in official record books.

CE Officer Crain stated that on August 12, 2025, the property was observed to be in compliance with all violations, and the daily fine ceased to accrue. The total accrued fine is \$41,550, and the administrative and recording fees totaled \$201.

CE Officer Crain stated that she spoke with the current property owner, Ms. Dolores Francisco, on October 29, 2025. She stated that after the lien was recorded in late 2021, Mr. and Mrs. Francisco were divorced. CE Officer Crain explained the process of requesting a lien reduction to Ms. Francisco. Ms. Fransico paid the outstanding administrative and recording fees on this day, and submitted a written request to reduce the lien.

CE Officer Crain stated the property is currently assessed at \$64,350. The lien reduction request was presented to the Special Magistrate on January 22, 2026. Magistrate Bills accepted the staff recommendation and entered an Order to reduce the lien of \$41, 550 to \$5,000 per the Town of Lady Lake Land Development Regulations Chapter 1, Section 83(h) and 83(h)(5)(a):

The Town Commission may reduce liens to \$5,000 or 25% of the appraised value of the property, whichever is less.

CE Officer Crain stated that 25% of the appraised value of this property is \$16,087. She reiterated that the property is in complete compliance and has been maintained in good appearance and condition since August 2025.

CE Officer Crain stated that the goal of the Code Enforcement process is to obtain voluntary and cooperative compliance and not financially penalize property owners.

Commissioner Roberts stated that this property was out of compliance for a long time and inquired if it is typical with some of those properties.

CE Officer Crain stated that there have been properties out of compliance for a much longer period of time. The new owner of this property was determined to clean up the property.

Commissioner Roberts inquired if Code Enforcement monitors properties regularly to ensure they are in compliance.

CE Officer Crain replied affirmatively.

Town Manager Bill Lawrence commended Senior Code Enforcement Officer Crain and Code Enforcement Officer Denise Williams for their efforts with the Skyline area. He expressed his appreciation and stated there has been a dramatic cleanup in this area over the past three years.

Mayor Freeman concurred, adding that Commissioner Gourlie was instrumental in addressing this area and helped to improve it. He stated that he sees the improvements the property owners have made when he drives through this area.

Commissioner Sage inquired if the town has the legal authority to hire a contractor to clean up a property for less than \$5,000.

Officer Crain stated that the town had an abatement program in the past where the property value was assessed at 10% interest and applied as a lien. She stated that the town does not have the funds or the staff to reimplement this program, yet it had been discussed in the recent past. She added that advertising for bids and hiring a private contractor is too expensive.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts and seconded by Commissioner Regan, the Commission approved the lien reduction from \$41,550 to \$5,000 for Code Enforcement Case 20-7631.

Motion passed by a vote of 4-0.

8. MAYOR AND COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Sage stated with the information presented at the Commission Workshop held on January 21, he asked Chat GPT what issues were currently in the state legislature. He stated that he received a complete breakdown of the House resolution bills that had been passed, in the running, or were likely to be considered.

Commissioner Roberts stated that she and Mayor Freeman were in Tallahassee for Legislative Action Days. She stated that they had meetings with Senator Truenow and Representative Nan Cobb, and sat in on many other meetings. She stated that in a meeting with Senator Truenow, he stated that "he's more of a fee guy than a property tax guy". Alternatively, Representative Nan Cobb seemed more sympathetic, having served in the Eustis City Commission. She stated that Rep. Cobb understands the impact this will have on local municipal government.

Commissioner Roberts noted that many committee reports lack detail, the comments were vague, there were several requests for further clarification and yet, they were given a positive vote. She stated that some lobbyists conveyed to her that there is a lot of money available with various Bills and they do not want to upset anyone this early in the session. She stated that Representative Cobb's opinion is that something will happen. However, at this stage there were at least eight Bills in the House and none of them seemed to be the frontrunner.

Commissioner Roberts stated that she made many connections with other commissioners. They discussed various avenues where the Town could look to generate revenue should this law pass.

Mayor Freeman clarified that Representative Nan Cobb is not in favor of all these tax adjustments. He stated that a representative with the Florida League of Cities attended the Florida League of Mayors meeting and advised that there are three House Joint Resolution Bills for consideration:

HJR 203 - would eliminate homestead property taxes over 10 years.

HJR 209 – would reduce homestead for people who are over 60 years old.

HJR 213 – is tied to the reduction if the property owner has homeowner insurance.

Mayor Freeman stated that there were several suggestions on how to recover the loss of property taxes. He stated that many towns will not survive if there are no property taxes, and it would then become the responsibility of the respective county to provide for those areas. He stated that counties will lose property taxes as well. There would be significantly less money to maintain roads and rights-of-way, and public safety services would be eliminated in many areas.

Commissioner Regan asked if the governor has an alternate plan to make up for the deficits.

Mayor Freeman replied negatively.

Commissioner Regan stated that he has read that the state anticipates a deficit within the next two years, and now the governor wants to cut property taxes.

Mayor Freeman stated that the governor has stated that he does not want any new taxes.

9. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Bill Lawrence stated that the Town of Lady Lake is in good financial shape currently, and the department managers have presented plans for alternative sources of revenue. He stated that property taxes account for 25% of the town's general fund.

Mr. Lawrence stated that the 11th annual Mock Commission Meeting was held Thursday, January 29, in conjunction with the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 347 and the Villages Charter School Civics Classes. He expressed his appreciation to the mayor and the department managers who helped the students throughout the day. This event allows the students to learn how local government works. They participated in two mock commission meetings and toured the police department.

Mr. Lawrence stated that the Lady Lake Library Open House will be Monday, February 23 at 9:30AM.

Meet the Mayor at the Lady Lake Farmer's Market on Tuesday, February 3, beginning at 11:00AM.

Mr. Lawrence stated the presentation of the police department's new building is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18 at 4:30 PM. (Staffing and Space Needs Study; Stockton Reeves, Center for Public Safety)

Town Clerk Kathy Rosado announced there will be a special election on March 24, 2026, to fulfill the unexpired term left vacant by the passing of Ward 2 Commissioner John Gourlie. There will be a notice in the newspaper (Feb. 9), and the qualifying dates are forthcoming. The special election will cost approximately \$30,000.

Commissioner Sage inquired if the candidate must adhere to the same regulations as in a regular election.

Ms. Rosado replied affirmatively.

Mayor Freeman added that the candidate must be a resident of Ward 2.

Ms. Rosado clarified further that the candidate must be a resident of Lady Lake residing in Ward 2 for a minimum of one year.

Commissioner Roberts inquired if the town's regulations specify a special election is held this quickly after a vacancy, and the procedure if there are no applications.

Town Attorney Derek Schroth stated that the special election process is in the Town Charter. He stated that the town would be in violation of the charter if there are no applications, albeit not at our doing. Another special election would be scheduled.

Commissioner Sage verified with Ms. Rosado that if just one application is received, the town is not required to hold a special election.

10. TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Town Attorney Derek Schroth expressed his condolences for Commissioner Gourlie and his family. He stated that he enjoyed working with him.

Mr. Schroth stated that at a previous commission meeting the Mayor inquired if the town has the authority to regulate open burning in regard to when land is cleared by developers. He advised that there is no prohibition on the town from instituting regulations that stop or prohibit all burning of debris, garbage, lawn trimmings, trees, etc. He stated that he contacted the Division of Forestry for the State of Florida who provided specific language for this regulation that would outline specific authorizations from Department of Environmental Protection and the Forestry Service, should they grant authority for burns. There are no authorities currently.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Reverend Harsh offered his condolences to the Town Commission regarding the unexpected passing of Commissioner John Gourlie.

James Oldham, 817 Bolivar Street

Mr. Oldham expressed his appreciation to the Commissioners for their dedication to the Town of Lady Lake.

Mary Jane Klocke, 817 Bolivar Street

Ms. Klocke expressed her support for the Pride Month Proclamation.

12. ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.



Kathleen Rosado, Town Clerk



Ed Freeman, Mayor