

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

May 18, 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
McLea (Two)	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; Lady Lake Police Chief Steve Hunt; Lady Lake Deputy Chief Jason Brough; Lt. Robert Tempesta, Lady Lake Police Department; Tamika DeLee, Human Resources Director; Joella LeDonne, Finance Director; John Pearl, IT Director; Elisha Pappacoda, Communications Director; Town of Lady Lake Public Works Staff: Todd Foster; Travis Lacey; Billy Kohler; Phillip Perna; Kon Scott; Justin Wallace; Jordan Correa; Joshua Fitchpatrick; Jim Richards; Steve Pfouts; Darryl Falnders; Daniel Myklejord; Matthew Edwards; Tom Ochenas; Ted Williams, Street Maintenance Supervisor; Butch Goodman, Utility Supervisor; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; and Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk.

Town Attorney Derek Schroth was also in attendance.

3. INVOCATION

Led by Mayor/Commission Ed Freeman

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. PRESENTATIONS

- a. **Proclamation** — Poppy Day, May 22, 2026, Presented to the American Legion Ladies Auxiliary representatives.
- b. **Proclamation** — National Public Works Week 2026, Presented to C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director.

6. CONSENT — (Public Comment Taken)

- a. **Communications** — Consideration of Approval to Advertise RFP No. 2026-004 for Town-Wide Branding & Identity Development, Placemaking, and Strategic Marketing Consulting Services (Elisha Pappacoda)
- b. **Public Works** — Consideration of Approval of Agreement with Black and Veatch for FDEP Resilient Florida Vulnerability Assessment. (C.T. Eagle)
- c. **Town Clerk's Office** — Approval of the Special Conceptual Workshop Minutes — May 4, 2026 (Kathy Rosado)
- d. **Town Clerk's Office** — Approval of the Town Commission Meeting Minutes — May 4, 2026 (Kathy Rosado)

Upon a motion by Commissioner McLea and seconded by Commissioner Roberts, the Commission approved the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion carried 5-0.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Town Clerk's Office — Ordinance 2026-08 – First Reading – An Ordinance of the Town of Lady Lake, Providing for Amendment of the Town Charter; Amending Article IV — Legislative, Section 4.04 — Vacancies, Forfeiture of Office; Filling of Vacancies Qualifications; Amending Article I, In General Section 2.5 – Appointment of Canvassing Board when Necessary. (Kathleen Rosado)**

Town Clerk Kathleen Rosado stated that this year, the Town of Lady Lake held a special election due to the death of Commissioner Gourlie. As it currently states in the Charter Article IV Section 4.04- vacancies, Paragraph C — If the unexpired term exceeds one (1) year, then the town clerk shall, within ten (10) days after such vacancy occurs, call a special election to be held within forty-five(45) days from such call to fill the vacancy. In such cases, the person so elected, either by the remaining members of the commission or by popular vote, as the case may be, shall hold office for the balance of the unexpired term.

The special election was held on March 24, 2026. The voter turnout for this special election was 8.74% or 153 registered voters. The cost to hold this election was \$9,374.70. She stated has discussed with members of the commission regarding perhaps a more viable way to fill a vacancy, should one exist, that would not incur such an expense to the Town of Lady Lake. She

stated she also polled other municipalities to see how their charters read for the filling of vacancies. Ms. Rosado proposed the following changes to the town charter regarding special elections:

Amendment 1 — Article IV Section 4.04 Vacancies, paragraph C — If any vacancy occurs in the office of any member of the town commission and the unexpired term is less than one (1) year, then the remaining members of the town commission, within thirty (30) days from the date of such vacancy, by a majority vote, elect appoint a qualified person meeting the qualifications set forth in the Charter to fill the vacancy until the next general municipal election, at which time a successor shall be elected by the electorate. ~~If the unexpired term exceeds one (1) year, then the town clerk shall, within ten (10) days after such vacancy occurs, call a special election to be held within forty five (45) days from such call, to fill the vacancy. In such cases, the person so elected, either by the remaining members of the commission or by popular vote, as the case may be, shall hold office for the balance of the unexpired term. If the term of the commissioner whose departure created the vacancy has not expired at the time of the next general municipal election, the successor appointed shall serve only for the remainder of the term of the departed commissioner, at the end of which an election shall be held to fill the next full term for that seat.~~

Less than 1 year — appoint a qualified person by majority vote.

More than 1 year — appoint a qualified person to serve till the next general municipal election, at which time they would have to be elected by the electorate. The elected candidate would only serve the remainder of the original term of office for the vacant position.

Should the commission approve the changes in Amendment 1, then there would be no need to have a special election, as the town's elections run concurrently with the Lake County elections in November. If we do not have a special election, there is no need for a canvassing board. My recommendation is to remove this section from the Charter.

Amendment 2. Article 1. In General Section 2-5 Appointment of Canvassing Board when necessary — REMOVE ENTIRE SECTION

Ms. Rosado recommends approving Ord. 2026-08 and placing a referendum on the ballot to be voted on by the electorate of the Town of Lady Lake in the 2026 November election.

Commissioner Roberts stated that this ordinance is outlined clearly and recommends approving it and placing it on the ballot for this year's election.

Commissioner McLea stated that she recognizes the rapidity and strain of this year's special election. She stated that she is not in favor of limiting the voice of the voters and suggested having a supermajority vote instead of simple majority vote, and an appointment process that includes public interviews in open session.

Commissioner Roberts stated that appointing someone to fulfill an unexpired term and then running for election at the next municipal election achieves a balance. She stated that an application process is required for anyone who wishes to fill a vacant commission seat. She stated that she is in favor of the applicants introducing themselves at a public meeting prior to the supermajority vote.

Commissioner McLea stated that historically, an incumbent has an advantage in an election, and her term expires in 2028. This is a lot of time to make an impact.

Commissioner Roberts explained that this ordinance addresses the timing of filling a commission vacancy, the length of the term until the next election, and the requirement for the appointed individual to run for election if they so choose. She stated that it is not without precedent that sitting officials would be able to make an appointment, as this happens at the state level. The circumstances are important to control to get the best possible candidate.

Mayor Freeman commented that popularity can sometimes win elections rather than a candidate's qualifications for the position.

Commissioner Sage inquired if, in this situation, the town commission could have an election at a town meeting so the constituents of a particular ward could attend and vote for their candidate.

Ms. Rosado advised that all elections are run by the Supervisor of Elections.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Roberts and seconded by Commissioner Sage, the Commission approved the first reading of Ordinance 2026-08, Amending the Town Charter, Vacancies, Forfeiture of Office; Filling of Vacancies Qualifications; Appointment of Canvassing Board when Necessary, by the following roll call vote:

Commissioner (Ward)	Vote
Regan (Four)	YES
McLea (Two)	NO
Roberts (One)	YES
Sage (Five)	YES
Freeman (Three)	YES

Motion passed by a vote of 4-1.

- b. Public Works Department – Consideration of Approval of Stormwater Utility Implementation. (C.T. Eagle)**

Public Works Director C.T. Eagle stated that the Town Commission was previously presented with a feasibility study performed by Surface Water Professionals for the possible implementation of a new Stormwater Utility. At that time, the Town Commission denied the implementation of a new Stormwater Utility. Staff have been requested to bring this item back for further discussion. Town staff remains in support of the recommendations in the study, utilizing non-ad valorem assessments, establishing the ERU of 2,000 square feet, and setting the rate to \$4 per Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) for the Enhanced Tier of service. The Commission may also set the rate higher or lower if is so desired. If approved, Town Staff will begin preparation of the necessary documents to implement the new Stormwater Utility and begin the required proper public notice and advertising efforts. The related ordinances and documentation will be brought back to the Town Commission for final approval prior to implementation.

Mr. Eagle stated that Umatilla, Fruitland Park, Leesburg, Eustis, Mt Dora, Tavares, Minneola, Mascotte, Clermont, and Lake County have a stormwater assessment. He recommends collecting the assessment through the Lake County Tax Collector.

Mr. Eagle reviewed the town's stormwater maintenance program's costs and how they are allocated across several funds.

Mr. Eagle stated that he recommends implementing a Stormwater Utility as a means of enhancing resilience to flooding, protecting water quality, and promoting sustainable growth and development for future generations. Consider a 2,000 sq ft ERU with a rate of \$4.00 per ERU in order to fund an Enhanced Stormwater Program, and utilize the existing non-ad valorem tax system to collect an annual fee.

Commissioner Regan inquired if more personnel are required.

Mr. Eagle stated that no additional personnel or equipment are required immediately, as this program would be implemented slowly. Additional personnel and equipment needs will be assessed once funds are in place.

Town Manager Bill Lawrence stated that the stormwater program is an alternative revenue source to continue providing the level of service the residents and businesses are currently receiving if the proposed law to eliminate property taxes is passed. This would save money in the general fund.

Mayor Freeman inquired about the cost per household for this assessment.

Mr. Eagle stated it is \$48 annually for a residential unit. Commercial properties are assessed per square footage of impervious area.

Commissioner McLea stated that she is in favor of the stormwater utility program as it creates a stable and dedicated ability to budget without affecting the general fund. It allows the town to pursue grants and matching funds, and protects our waterways.

Commissioner Sage confirmed with Mr. Eagle that the Public Works budget would be reduced if the stormwater utility fund is established. He inquired if projects to improve flooding issues would be paid from this fund.

Mr. Eagle replied affirmatively, adding that certain maintenance programs and personnel will be transferred to the stormwater fund, which decreases certain line items in the Public Works Streets budget.

Mr. Eagle stated that town staff quickly devised a plan for funding certain projects as Hurricane Milton was approaching. He stated that contingency funds had to be used to pump water out of a flooding pond. Having a dedicated fund for stormwater issues would not affect the general fund.

Commissioner Roberts confirmed with Mr. Eagle that the stormwater utility budget is another funding source that includes line items for personnel, maintenance and repairs, etc., that does not come out of the general fund.

Mr. Eagle replied affirmatively adding that this restricted fund is another division in public works. He stated that it will be included in the general fund for the FY 2026-2027 budget to show the costs the town expends on stormwater issues. The funds would replace the general fund money with the collected enterprise fund money if the town commission decides to proceed with the stormwater assessment.

Upon a motion by Commissioner McLea and seconded by Commissioner Regan, the Commission approved the Stormwater Utility Implementation by the following roll call vote:

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

Motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

8. MAYOR AND COMMISSIONER’S REPORT

Commissioner Roberts stated that she attended the Heartland League of Cities meeting in Webster, FL. She stated that the Sumter County Manager spoke about DOGE across the state, mainly focusing on major cities and counties, and what the state has been doing.

Commissioner Roberts attended the FL League of Cities Level Three Leadership training, where many elected officials from across the state discussed courage, civility and community impact. They also discussed how to interact with the community and our fellow commissioners, how to create a positive environment for being interactive and responsive to our respective communities, and how to understand how to best communicate the needs of the government and the needs of the individual, and come together for the best possible result. She stated that it was an encouraging and interesting program.

Mayor Freeman stated that he attended the Heartland League of Cities meeting in Webster, FL as well.

Mayor Freeman stated that he was awarded a Home Rule Hero pin from the Florida League of Cities.

Mayor Freeman stated that a Pride organization in Orlando has asked that the town read a proclamation for Pride Month, and inquired if the Commissioners are in favor of him reading this proclamation.

Commissioner Regan agreed that this needs to be discussed. He stated that he had read it and inquired if this was the proclamation that would be read.

Mayor Freeman advised that he would read the same proclamation that has been read in the past. He apologized for not having the proclamation to hand out to the commissioners tonight. He stated that the Town Clerk will forward it to the commissioners and asked that each commissioner respond to Ms. Rosado individually with their opinion.

Commissioner McLea asked if they are to indicate whether they agree with reading the proclamation or if they are to submit changes to it.

Mayor Freeman stated to respond whether in support or not in support of reading the proclamation.

Commissioner Regan stated this is a difficult situation for the commission. If the commission chooses not to have the proclamation read, it looks as though they are not in support of the subject matter. He stated that the state passed SB 1134 regarding a statewide ban on local governments promoting DEI initiatives. He questioned how to proceed with this matter if one or two commissioners do not want the proclamation to be read.

Town Attorney Derek Schroth advised that a policy regarding proclamations can be implemented as the town currently does not have a policy in place. He stated that a proclamation is read at the request of the mayor, mayor pro-tem, commissioner, or town manager.

Attorney Schroth stated that there is no requirement for the commission to read a proclamation. He cautioned that if the commission refuses certain proclamations based on a protected class under federal law.

Commissioner McLea stated that she is in favor of implementing a policy regarding proclamations.

Commissioner Sage inquired how proclamations are issued and how are they approved.

Attorney Schroth stated that proclamations are written and submitted by various organizations and the town rarely drafts a proclamation.

Mayor Freeman clarified that there is no formal approval for a proclamation to be read.

Commissioner Roberts stated that a proclamation is a recognition of an event, a specific day, or a group of people. Supporting any of these proclamations does not require a vote. She stated that by limiting speech on others because we disagree, it changes how we operate in our society from a constitutional perspective. She stated that this country does not criminalize LGBTQ+ behavior. She stated that if the PRIDE month proclamation is not read, then no proclamations need to be read because now you're deciding which groups deserve recognition and which groups do not.

Commissioner Regan disagreed adding that this subject is different. People have opinions regarding this and they should not be shamed by expressing their desire that it not be read. He clarified that by expressing an opinion opposing a proclamation is an inaccurate representation of what this is. He stated that when a proclamation is read, it gives the impression that the entire commission is in support. He questioned why the commissioners are not informed when a proclamation will be read. He questioned whether a proclamation needs to be read that lets the residents know the town supports them.

Commissioner McLea stated that this proclamation is causing a divide in the community. She questioned if proclamations need to be read annually.

Mayor Freeman stated the people who have come forward regarding this proclamation are the ones creating the divide.

Commissioner Regan disagreed, adding that they are expressing their opinion.

Commissioner McLea stated that she is not in favor of reading the proclamation that the commission received.

Mayor Freeman advised that he will read the proclamation that has been read in the past, not the one that was emailed to the commission.

Commissioner Sage stated that if the commission chooses all proclamations need to be voted on, not just one. He stated that proclamations regarding controversial issues should not be read, such as the proclamation for the Fall of Saigon. He stated that he received phone calls regarding this.

Town Manager Bill Lawrence stated that proclamations are read at the discretion of the mayor. He stated that current and past members of the commission expressed to him that they should be included in the decision on which proclamations are to be read. Due to the Sunshine Law, this must be conducted in a public meeting. Because this is a controversial issue, the mayor is requesting feedback from the commission.

Mr. Lawrence stated that the town hires the best employees and does not discriminate. He stated that the town staff is a diversified group who provide excellent services to the town. He stressed that the decisions the commission makes affect town staff as well.

9. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Bill Lawrence acknowledged the town's Security Analyst, Howard Davis, who was nominated for the 2026 MS-ISAC Community Impact Award. This is a national cyber defense organization.

Mr. Lawrence stated that he will be attending the upcoming annual Florida City County Manager's conference.

10. TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Schroth stated that he would draft a policy regarding proclamations at the direction of the majority of the commission.


11. PUBLIC COMMENTS

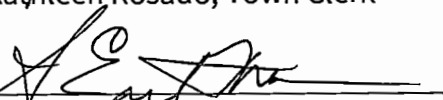
Reverend Dr. Paul Harsh, First Baptist Church of Lady Lake

Dr. Harsh stated that he appreciated the commissioners' discussion regarding the proclamations.

12. ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.


Kathleen Rosado, Town Clerk


Ed Freeman, Mayor