

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

August 17, 2026

This workshop 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 Ed Freeman presiding. The meeting convened at 4:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ed Freeman

2. ROLL CALL

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

STAFF PRESENT

William Lawrence, Town Manager; Kathy Rosado, Town Clerk; Thad Carroll, Growth Management Director; Joella LeDonne, Finance Director; Brandi Carson, Assistant Finance Director; Tamika DeLee, Human Resource Director; Elisha Pappacoda, Communications Director; Susyn Stecchi - Communications; Mike Burske, Parks and Recreation Director; Amy Alicia, Events Coordinator; Aly Herman, Library Director; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; John Pearl, IT Director; Police Chief Steve Hunt, Lady Lake Police Department; Deputy Chief Jason Brough, Lady Lake Police Department and Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk

3. INTRODUCTION

- a. Bill Lawrence, Town Manager

Mr. Lawrence stated that after the initial budget workshop in July, errors were discovered in the general fund revenue. This is regarding The Villages' pass-through funds for fire assessments in the amount of \$1.9M.

Mr. Lawrence stated that the proposed budget was created with the \$1.6M anticipated loss if the proposed property tax amendment passed in November. It was realized the budget would not be affected until FY2027-2028, and those funds were added to the FY2026-2027 budget.

Mr. Lawrence stated that, with these errors corrected, the FY2027 budget is at a deficit of \$750,000 in the General Fund Budget.

Mayor Freeman stated that \$1,950,000 was not included in the expenditures, yet the revenue and expenses are equal. He noted the revenue for The Villages is included, and the expenditure is not yet; both totals are the same.

Finance Director Joella LeDonne stated that \$1,950,000 was omitted from the expenses. She explained that this money was accounted for in the revenue and not in the expenditures. Therefore, this money was added to the expenses, which resulted in a deficit of \$750,000.

Mr. Lawrence advised of the following changes to the budget:

- Communications – added \$2K for advertising and \$20K for the branding contract (approved 2026).
- Library Annex – added \$3K for the air conditioning service contract, which was not included in the proposed budget.
- Police Department – added \$7,512 for the new contract increase for dispatch services. He explained this figure was not presented at the time of the budget workshop.
- Utilities – added \$68K for a new utilities software program.
- Parks and Recreation – added \$2K for Halloween events.
- Human Resources – added \$553 for related line items due to not being funded adequately at the time of the budget workshop.
- Chamber membership – not included at the time of the budget workshop. He stated that this was omitted last year and the commission approved a membership at the \$2,500 level. Mr. Lawrence stated that the Chamber of Commerce is no longer located in Lady Lake and changed their name to North Lake Area Chamber of Commerce. He stated that Ms. Alecia does use their services.

Mr. Lawrence explained that to rectify the errors and balance the budget, \$864K was transferred from the general fund reserves and \$444K from the enterprise funds. He stressed that the reserve accounts remain sound and that the general fund has the required three months of reserves. The budget is balanced with the same mill rate.

Mayor Freeman inquired if the deficit is related to ad valorem taxes.

Mr. Lawrence clarified that the deficit is due to The Villages fire assessment funds being omitted in the budget's expenditures. He reiterated that the budget was created anticipating the estimated revenue loss if the proposed property tax law was passed. He stated that if the law passes in November, our budget would not be affected until the FY2028 budget.

Commissioner Roberts inquired if the \$864K is in addition to what was previously in the budget.

Ms. LeDonne confirmed that it is in addition to the \$750K plus the additional expenses reviewed by Mr. Lawrence. She stated that the proposed budget utilized some reserve funds to balance the budget.

Commissioner Roberts inquired if the \$444K from the enterprise funds was included in the \$864K total.

Ms. LeDonne replied negatively. She clarified that \$864K is being transferred into the general fund, and the \$444K is being transferred into the utility enterprise fund.

Discussion was held regarding the Chamber membership.

Commissioner McLea stated that she is hesitant to forgo this membership, as it is important to stay connected to the business. She stated that Ms. Alecia needs businesses for fundraising sources.

Ms. Alecia stated that she values her relationship with the Chamber. She stated that it is acceptable to join at the lowest level, which allows her to attend the meetings. She clarified that the upper-level membership awards her a large logo on the Chamber emails and one ticket to the gala.

Commissioner Roberts stated that she appreciates the Chamber and is not opposed to a modest level of membership.

Commissioner Regan and Commissioner Sage agree that a lower-level membership is acceptable.

Mr. Lawrence encouraged the commissioners to contact the department managers if they have any questions regarding their respective budgets.

Commissioner McLea inquired if the funds added to the various budgets were the original cuts.

Mr. Lawrence clarified that it is a combination of the funds that were removed, incorrect numbers, and information that was received after the proposed budget was completed.

Human Resources

Mr. Lawrence stated that Ms. DeLee has amended her budget to include \$553.

Communications - Elisha Pappacoda

Ms. Pappacoda stated that \$2K was cut from the communications advertising budget. She stated that these funds are needed to promote the new branding. She stated that the current communications budget was approved and included \$30K for branding. She stated that she will

utilize \$10K from the current budget and carry over the remaining \$20K to the FY2027 budget because the branding will not be completed in this fiscal year.

Parks & Recreation and Community Building

Mr. Burske stated that he made significant cuts to the FY2027 parks and recreation budget, yet it requires an additional \$2K.

Discussion

Commissioner Sage inquired if the town is considering a hiring freeze, noting that many towns in Florida are implementing this.

Mr. Lawrence stated that new positions are not included in the budget. He stated that current positions will be filled if any become available. Based on the town's population, the number of town employees is low.

Commissioner Sage inquired if the town's fire assessment fees could be reviewed for a possible increase in additional revenue.

Mr. Lawrence replied negatively, adding that the fees are set by Lake County Fire Department and The Villages Public Safety. The town has no control over setting the assessment fees.

Commissioner Roberts clarified that these funds are a pass-through within our budget. The Villages Public Safety assessment is lower than the Lake County Fire assessment.

Commissioner Sage stated that the town could save expenses by budgeting for one commissioner to attend a Florida League of Cities conference. He stated that the minutes are accessible through ChatGPT without incurring any expenses to the town. He stated that the commissioner who attends the conferences should provide a report outlining the sessions.

Commissioner Roberts stated that she is amenable to providing a report. One of which is a live ethics program delivered by an attorney where attendees ask questions. This session fulfills the required ethics training rather than completing the course online. She concurred with Commissioner Sage that reporting on what she learns at a conference is beneficial for commissioners.

Commissioner Roberts stated that it is beneficial to attend the sessions in person. More than one session is presented at the same time, and one person cannot attend them all.

Commissioner Roberts advised that she applied to be included in the Florida League of Cities Fast Action Strike Task Force, which is responsible for sending elected municipal officers to Washington at their own expense to lobby with their respective congresspersons on pertinent issues that will impact municipalities and inform them of the implications of their decisions from a local perspective.

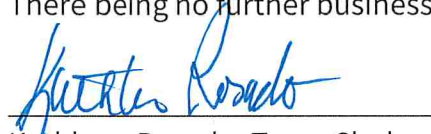
This is the same as when she attends sessions in Tallahassee and discusses issues with our legislators, state senators, and state representatives. She stated that the session regarding the proposed property tax law was well attended by multiple commissioners from neighboring municipalities.

Commissioner Regan concurred with Commissioner Sage. He stated that he needs to see value in the town's expenditure, and that he has not seen anything that the Florida League of Cities has done that benefited the town.

Mayor Freeman stated he will provide a report on the sessions he attended.

4. ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kathleen Rosado", written over a horizontal line.

Kathleen Rosado, Town Clerk

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Freeman", written over a horizontal line.

Ed Freeman, Mayor