

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

December 4, 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 Freeman presiding. The meeting convened at 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

INVOCATION

Pastor Michael Storts from Church at the Springs gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Mayor Freeman

ROLL CALL

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

STAFF PRESENT

Bill Lawrence, Town Manager; Thad Carroll, Growth Management Director; Becky Higgins, Senior Planner; Elisha Pappacoda, Communications Director; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; John Pearl, IT Director; Steve Hunt, Police Chief; Nancy Wilson, Town Clerk
Town Attorney Derek Schroth was also in attendance.

A. CONSENT

- Minutes — November 15, 2023 — Special Town Commission Meeting
- Minutes — November 20, 2023 — Town Commission Meeting Minutes

Mayor Freeman stated that in the November 20, 2023 draft minutes regarding the new traffic on Clay Ave., he clarified that he had stated, "...stop signs would be a good idea...". The town clerk verified that the minutes had been corrected.

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

TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Town Attorney Schroth stated that he would like to schedule a workshop on Wednesday, December 13th at 3:30 PM, to review the Sunshine Law, Public Records Law, and Ethics. (Meeting has since been changed to December 18th at 4:00 PM.)

3. Ordinance 2023-20 — First Reading - An Ordinance Adopting Corrections, Updates and Modifications to the Capital Improvements Schedule of the Town of Lady Lake Comprehensive Plan

Growth Management Director Carroll stated that this ordinance is a formality and is presented annually. By statute, the town is required to adopt a Capital Improvements Plan which is part of the Comprehensive Plan. The Capital Improvement Plan update process and the corresponding requirements are no longer required to be processed by a Comprehensive Plan Amendment but may be adopted by local ordinance.

The plan addresses the town's proposed capital improvements over the next five years; Mr. Carroll read through the proposed capital improvements: the water system, the wastewater and stormwater system, town facilities, information technology, the transportation system, public school facilities and parks and recreation facilities.

Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2023-20 on first reading as presented; Commissioner Roberts seconded.

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

Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

4. Resolution 2023-113 – First and Final Reading - Variance - A Resolution Granting a Variance to Allow Additional Tenants to be Added to the Monument Sign in Accordance with the Provisions of Chapter 17, Section 17-4. b). 2). D)., of the Town of Lady Lake Land Development Regulations, on Property Owned by The Enclave Condominium Assn, Inc, a Property Being Approximately 5.0 Acres of Land, Located at 871 Highway 466, Within the Town Limits of the Town of Lady Lake, FL

Growth Management Director Carroll stated that the Land Development Regulations limit the number of tenant names that can be placed on a monument sign to eight, the request is for nine names. The applicant is Theresa Northup of Mid-Florida Signs & Graphics and she applied for the variance on behalf of the property owner, The Enclave Condominium Association, for property located at 871 Highway 466 in Lady Lake, Florida. The property is currently under construction and is proposed to be a medical center.

On January 23, 2019, the Town Commission approved the site plan for this project, formerly known as SAP Property Holdings, and a Development Order was subsequently issued. The site plan is for a multi-tenant medical, professional, and office complex consisting of nine buildings, each with two tenants. The permit for the first building was issued on February 24, 2022, and is currently being occupied by Pulse MD. The permits for the remaining eight buildings were issued on October 4, 2022, and are currently under construction. In October 2023, the variance application was filed with the town to allow for the nine tenant names to be placed on the monument sign in front of the property.

The applicant's justification statement expresses that the layout of the property is such that six of the nine buildings on the property are not visible from the point of entry on Highway 466. The owner submits that there is a necessity to have one sign panel for each building, both for the benefit of the general public's ability to see and to locate any business residing in the six buildings and for the business occupants of those buildings that cannot be seen from Highway 466.

Staff recommended the denial of this application because there are several other complexes in the area that are similar in nature, such as Sunset Professional Center and The Summit. Both developments have utilized a primary sign and, once into the development, navigation to the location is easy by using their directory signs. The idea is to not have signs too cluttered along the highway as it is too much to look at in passing.

Mr. Carroll recommends denial of the variance request due to formerly mentioned medical developments in near proximity that have been successful in using directory signs.

1 At the November 13, 2023, Planning and Zoning meeting the members voted 5-0 to forward
2 Resolution 2023-113 to the Town Commission with the recommendation of denial.

3 Commissioner Regan verified with Mr. Carroll that the other signs in the area have eight
4 names listed. Mr. Carroll clarified that the sign at the plaza where Best Buy is located has
5 more names. He stated that our code has since been updated. Mr. Carroll advised that the
6 medical facilities that have been developed since 2008, have adhered to the limit of eight
7 tenant names.

8 Commissioner Regan verified that eight names on a sign is beneficial as it is not cluttered. Mr.
9 Carroll agreed and stated that plazas typically put their primary occupants on the signs. He
10 stated that more than eight names on a sign are a lot to look at as you enter the plaza. He
11 advised that he feels the directory signs, which they can use, is a better navigation tool within
12 the development and it is not distracting to motorists passing by.

13 Commissioner Roberts asked what the restrictions are for directory signs. Mr. Carroll said that
14 once you enter the plaza, there would be a listing of the buildings, along with arrows pointing
15 to the areas where certain buildings are located.

16 Commissioner Gourlie stated that three commissioners were not here when the construction
17 of the facility took place. He stated that this development was constructed with no regard to
18 our building standards and our building codes as far as appearance goes. Concessions were
19 made to allow a moderate change to their building to conform to our standards.

20 Commissioner Gourlie stated that he is in favor of denial.

21 Commissioner Sage agreed to deny their request based on the information from
22 Commissioner Gourlie.

23 Mayor Freeman stated he believes a monument sign with just the name of the facility is more
24 than adequate. He said this is not like a drive-by business, these are doctors' offices and
25 people who have an appointment already know where they are going.

26 **Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to deny Resolution 2023-113 on first and final**
27 **reading as presented; Commissioner Regan seconded.**

28 Mayor Freeman opened the floor for public comment.

29 Teresa Northup, Mid-Florida Signs and Graphics

30 Ms. Northup stated that she is not aware of the construction issues at the beginning of this
31 project. She stated that they attempted to design a sign that was aesthetically pleasing and
32 the difference between eight and nine panels did not make a difference in appearance. She

1 stated that she has observed other signs around town that have eight panels and on one of
2 the signs, the panel on the bottom is split. She stated that the sign they designed with nine
3 panels looks much nicer. She acknowledged that these medical practices have one sign as
4 you enter the complex, and directory signs internally but they are laid out in a circle until you
5 find your building.

6 Ms. Northup explained that their complex is not laid out in a circle. She stated that making a
7 wrong turn would require a U-turn. From a tenant perspective, it would not be fair to
8 eliminate one tenant from the sign.

9 Commissioner Gourlie stated that he does not dislike the sign but that the development
10 needed to be designed for better access to the buildings. He reiterated that they did not
11 adhere to our rules.

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

12 **Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.**

13 **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

14 Town Manager Lawrence gave a shout out to Mike Burske, Parks and Recreation Director, the
15 police department, and the public works department for the great Christmas parade. He
16 expressed his appreciation to all who worked behind the scenes making the Christmas
17 parade such a success.

18 He reminded everyone of the workshop on Wednesday, December 6th at 3pm to meet the
19 department directors who will discuss their current and future projects.

20 Light Up Lady Lake is Friday, December 8th at 6:00 p.m. at the Log Cabin.

21 The employee Christmas party will start at noon on Wednesday, December 13. The
22 commissioners are invited.

1 Mr. Lawrence informed the new commissioners that events are listed on the town website,
2 along with the calendar. He advised that the new website should be live around the end of
3 January.

4 **MAYOR AND COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

5 Commissioner Roberts stated that she accepted an invitation to visit the Grand Oaks
6 property. She stated that she met with Greg Belleview, LPG Urban and Regional Planners, and
7 Jeff Wagner of New Vision Development Group, who showed her the presentation of the
8 project that was given to the previous commission earlier this year. They discussed in depth
9 their ideas regarding developing the property. Ms. Roberts stated that they suggested that
10 their development ideas have already been modified to address the concerns of the
11 neighbors.

12 Ms. Roberts said that they took her on a tour of the perimeter of the property, pointing out
13 which areas will be developed, and which areas will not be developed. She stated that they
14 are considering bringing a few models of the homes that they are proposing to show
15 concerned neighbors.

16 Ms. Roberts stated that she met with Mr. Belleview and Mr. Wagner for approximately two
17 hours. She did not give her opinion either way; she simply wanted to see the area because she
18 knows it is an issue with the community.

19 Mayor Freeman thanked everyone who was involved with the parade. He also thanked the
20 police department and all those who attended The Villages Christmas Parade, and hopes they
21 appreciated the town's support.

22 **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

23 Tom Nash - 3546 Griffin Avenue

24 Mr. Nash said he has concerns about the Grand Oaks Conceptual Plan that was presented to
25 the Town Commission in September 2023. Town staff has been working on this with the
26 owner's representatives to get the ball rolling for approximately two years. He said the
27 residents of Lady Lake have only had a couple of months. Upon his first inquiry to staff, he
28 was told that it is too early to be voicing their concerns since no application had been
29 submitted and that there was nothing for them to be worried about at that point. It could
30 take years for something to happen. Mr. Nash said the neighbors met with the Grand Oaks
31 representatives and they plan on submitting their application in the coming months. The
32 representatives are extremely confident that they can push their way through. The sole
33 reason Grand Oaks Equestrian Center is coming before the Town of Lady Lake Commission to

1 request the annexation and rezoning is that the Lake County Building and Zoning Department
2 will not allow them to build a project of this magnitude, so they are looking to circumvent the
3 system to proceed. The mission statement of the Town of Lady Lake zoning addresses the
4 citizens of Lady Lake not the town. If approved, this project would significantly impact the
5 Town of Lady Lake and her citizens. The proposed communities are swiftly eating up the
6 small-town atmosphere that is advertised on the town's website. Our rural environment is
7 being destroyed. With all the construction already underway, and the other approved
8 projects gearing up, the decisions made by the elected officials have taken away more of our
9 environmental resources by removing trees, disturbing the natural environment, and creating
10 more of a burden on our aquifer. The approval of the Grand Oaks project will require the
11 removal of additional forested area and will continue to erode our natural environment and
12 resources. The added years of road construction this project will bring to the immediate area
13 with the need to bring in water, sewer, infrastructure services and all that is needed to
14 facilitate such a project will grossly impact their quality of life. They have already been
15 subjected to enough with the construction that has been happening on CR 25 for the last
16 couple of years. Do we need or want more? Another concern is the welfare and safety of the
17 community as it is predominantly made up of elderly and retired people. A 5,200 increase in
18 population raises the potential for more crime and the elderly are the most vulnerable. Also,
19 there are not 5,200 jobs to sustain that population. The Villages are still expanding rapidly
20 and there are now homes being created for non-retirees and families. Those new residents
21 will also need to find employment. He is asking for the commission to vote no on the
22 annexation of the Grand Oaks property.

23 Kathleen Farner - 41240 Gibraltar Road

24 Ms. Farner stated that her property is contiguous to Grand Oaks. She congratulated the three
25 new commissioners and the new mayor and thanked them for their willingness to serve on
26 this commission, and for their time and personal sacrifices that they're willing to make to
27 serve their community. She stated that it is her sincere hope that they have the courage and
28 the wisdom to make decisions that are in the best interests of this community and the
29 affected surrounding areas. Ms. Farner advised that she was also in attendance to provide
30 input regarding Grand Oaks, in particular, property rights. She stated that in the summer of
31 2021, Florida required every city and county to include in its comprehensive plan a property
32 rights element. One thousand Friends of Florida, along with the staff of the University of
33 Florida authored a model property rights element to assist in meeting this requirement. On
34 February 23, 2022, the Town of Lady Lake complied with this requirement by adopting
35 Ordinance 2021-13. However, multiple changes were made to the model property rights

1 element by the Town of Lady Lake that significantly reduced the rights intended for property
2 owners. Some of these changes include: instead of the term, “make decisions with respect to
3 property rights”, the wording was changed to, “engage in local decision-making”; instead of a
4 thirty-day notice mailed before a hearing to the owners of real property and residents within
5 1,320 feet, the language was changed to 14 days, and to 150-feet. An entire section was not
6 included in Lady Lake’s adopted plan. This section pertained to providing every affected
7 person the opportunity to participate early and throughout the decision-making process,
8 which included requiring applicants to hold a public pre-application meeting, requiring the
9 city to mail notice to the residents and the owners within 1,320 feet of the property, and
10 requiring time for all people attending to provide input and to include this input in the
11 application. Rather than a majority-plus-one vote required for an affirmative vote on a
12 proposed change, it was reduced to a majority vote. Also not included in Lady Lake’s property
13 rights element was to grant any affected person equal opportunity for input. In other words,
14 we, the public, are afforded a three-minute opportunity, while the developers and the
15 applicants get to speak for however long you allow them. Ms. Farner said that she read all of
16 the commissioner’s bios and commented that they are a board of highly accomplished,
17 creative and critical thinkers. She asked them, as they read applications and listen to
18 presentations by the applicants for this annexation and rezoning, to please consider what is
19 not included in the applications and presentations. They will hear many valid reasons from
20 the neighbors and community members who do not support this proposal. These reasons
21 transcend to future generations, this community, Lake County, and the State of Florida.
22 Please do not let this proposal only benefit the Town of Lady Lake and one property owner
23 with increased revenues and a path to more annexations for development. Ms. Farner stated
24 that she applauded those who visited Grand Oaks and really encouraged others to visit in the
25 next couple of weeks. Take a copy of their map and visualize and consider the impact of this
26 proposal on the beautiful rural property and a property that is mostly located in the Emerald
27 rural protected area. Drive the roads in the area, especially during times when people are
28 trying to get to work. Talk to the people of this community who have no ability to vote for the
29 officials who will make this decision. We sincerely welcome you.

30 Ms. Farner expressed her appreciation of the commission’s time.

31 William Dozier - 40230 Morning Mist Drive

32 Mr. Dozier stated that his main concern is that the developers are going to develop the area to
33 be much more densely populated than if Lake County developed the property. The county
34 has a future land use map that requires much larger lots. If 160 houses were built on the

1 Grand Oaks property that would mean one house per 2.5 acres, which is quite a bit less than
2 795 houses. Factoring in common areas, those 795 houses would sit on lot sizes of .15 acres.
3 He suggested that the commission members go on his website: stopgrandoaks.com and look
4 at the maps and overlays to see what future development would look like in that
5 neighborhood where the smallest property adjacent to it is 2.5 acres. This would be a drastic
6 change to the area, and it does not seem right to Mr. Dozier that the developer is going to use
7 the Town of Lady Lake to fulfill their goal of dense development when the county would not.

8 Lisa Berg – 2902 Marion County Road

9 Ms. Berg stated that she is contiguous on three sides with the Grand Oaks Resort. She wanted
10 to talk about something that is important to Lake County and the Town of Lady Lake which
11 they may not know. The commission plays a very important role in following town and county
12 official goals regarding responsible land use, community growth and development and how
13 these decisions affect everyone. Why do we need to maintain rural areas in our county and
14 town? One reason is food: meat, eggs, cheese, milk, fruit, vegetables, nuts, and honey. All
15 these things are part of the agricultural system which affects all of us and the agricultural
16 industry relies on veterinarians to keep the nation's livestock healthy, to ensure that our food
17 supply is safe and secure and to protect public health. In 2023, the USDA declare 237 rural
18 veterinary shortage areas in 47 states. That is more than any year to date and Florida is one of
19 these states. The shortage is expected to continue until the year 2030. The greatest current
20 need for veterinarians is in food/animal medicine. For over a decade, the government has
21 actively provided significant financial incentives to veterinarians to practice food/animal
22 medicine in the shortage areas. These financial incentives are going unclaimed because there
23 are not enough veterinarians to work in that field. This is important because the shortage of
24 food/animal vets is complicated and multi-faceted, but the best-known reason is lack of
25 familiarity with livestock by veterinary applicants. Veterinary school applicants who come
26 from urban backgrounds with little exposure to farm animals are less likely to pursue a career
27 in food/animal medicine. As Florida continues to grow and urbanize, it is effectively wiping
28 out small pockets of rural living which means that fewer children are exposed to food and
29 farm animals, fewer are involved in vital programs such as 4-H and Future Farmers of America
30 and consequently, if they choose veterinary medicine, they are less likely to practice
31 food/animal medicine. We need to work on keeping rural living alive in our communities. We
32 need backyard farms with cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, etc. Children need to be given the
33 opportunity to become familiar with livestock. As each development slices up land and
34 pushes small rural communities out of existence, we will be facing an agricultural crisis. The
35 importance of rural living needs to be recognized and planned for accordingly. It is our

1 responsibility to develop our land thoughtfully and with foresight of the future needs of our
2 community, our state and our country.

3 **ADJOURN**

4 There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

5 _____
6 Nancy Wilson, Town Clerk

7 _____
8 Ed Freeman, Mayor