MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING
TOWN OF LADY LAKE, FLORIDA
September 12, 2024

The special 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 5:00 p.m.

Mayor Freeman called to order the continuation of the September 4th meeting. Time was 5:00 p.m.

Mayor Freeman led the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

STAFF PRESENT:

Bill Lawrence, Town Manager; Pam Winegardner, Finance Director; John Pearl, IT Director; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; Mike Burske, Parks & Recreation Director; Elisha Pappacoda, Communications Director; Dawn Woods, Accountant I; Joella LeDonne, Assistant Finance Director; Steve Hunt, Police Chief; Nancy Wilson, Town Clerk.

PUBLIC HEARING

Finance Director Winegardner stated that she would like to begin by discussing the budget and the process of putting the budget together. She also wanted to explain TRIM (Truth in Millage) and how it is determined. The budget process begins every year in April when the department heads all begin their individual budgets that are based on historical and future needs. Before the budgets are reviewed, revenue is estimated by collecting data from the State of Florida and Lake County. Next, values from the property appraiser on estimated taxable value are determined. The values received from the property appraiser are calculated based on new construction, home valuation, renovation work and the sale of a home. The market value is about 90% of the real estate value. Those are the variables that go into a TRIM notice. Exemptions and Save Our Homes further impact TRIM.

When the individual budgets are submitted, they are sent to the Town Manager so he and Ms. Winegardner can review them. They compare those budgets to the estimated revenue. This year, over $1 million was cut from the budgets. The budget reflects changes made by the commission and the millage rate is 3.6510 to fund that budget.

Commissioner Sage stated that Ms. Winegardner said that this time last year we had $23 million in the bank. Ms. Winegardner clarified that we had $23 million at the time of their last bank reconciliation at the end of July. Last year at this time, we had $27 million; three years ago, we had $34 million. Our reserves are dropping though we continue to hold six months in reserve for emergencies.

Commissioner Sage asked why we cannot lower the millage since the PTO figure was removed from the budget. Ms. Winegardner explained that our budget increased 33.9% over last year and this is with the PTO item and others being removed from the budget. The library project is included in that increase.

Commissioner Sage asked if we took the same amount out of reserves in both the original and revised budgets. Ms. Winegardner answered that when the PTO funding was turned down by the commission, less money needed to come out of the reserve fund to fund the budget. If that money had been subtracted from the budget (rather than reserves), the millage could have been lowered.

Town Manager Lawerence said that we were told by our previous auditor that we had too much money in our reserve account and some of it needed to be spent. We had a couple big projects that needed to be completed so they were funded out of the reserve account. This is why the town has no debt. The Town Manager wants to keep the reserves intact but if prices keep going up and we have emergencies for which we do not get reimbursed we may have to have a big increase in the millage rate. That is why he is a proponent of smaller incremental increases.

Mayor Freeman asked Ms. Winegardner if we are using the actual millage rate for taxes. She confirmed that we are using the actual millage rate as noticed not the rollback rate which would make the increase look a lot higher. The millage rate increase is 7.5%, which is the first increase in eight years.

Commissioner Roberts said in terms of funding our budget from homeowner payments of property taxes, is it true that one-fifth of our budget is funded by property taxes? Ms. Winegardner answered in the affirmative. More of our budget is funded elsewhere and that speaks well of how the town manages funds. We have a multifaceted budget.

Commissioner Sage asked what the North Lake Hospital tax is and why it is on our tax bill. Commissioner Roberts answered that the North Lake Hospital District is a fund the hospital utilizes to pay for indigent care. There is a board that manages that millage rate.

Mayor Freeman called for a 30-minute recess at 5:34 p.m.

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

ROLL CALL

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

Resolution 2024-109 (First and Final Reading) — Adoption of the Tentative Millage Rate for Fiscal Year 2024—2025 (continued from the September 4th commission meeting).

Finance Director Winegardner stated that staff recommends approval of first and final reading of Resolution 2024-109 adopting the tentative millage rate of 3.6510 mills for Fiscal Year 2024—2025.

The resolution sets the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 tentative property tax millage rate of 3.6510 mills per $1,000 taxable valuation, which is 17.99% greater than the current years rolled back rate of 3.0944.

Per State Statute Chapter 200.065, the Town of Lady Lake must hold a public hearing on the tentative millage rate and proposed budget. At this hearing, the Town Commission will discuss the tentative millage rate, and if changed, re-compute its tentative millage rate and publicly announce the percent, if any, by which the re-computed tentative millage is greater than or less than the rolled-back rate and approve the resolution.

As a reminder, the Town Commission can increase the millage rate at this meeting, but at the second public hearing on September 16th, you will not be able to increase it from what was approved at this meeting. This tentative rate, plus any other rate below this rate, requires an affirmative vote of three members of the Town Commission.

The hearing was advertised via the TRIM notice mailed out by the Property Appraiser.

Commissioner Gourie made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-109, adoption of the tentative millage rate for fiscal year 2024-2025; Commissioner Roberts seconded.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

Ordinance 2024-21 (First Reading) - Adoption of Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (continued from September 4th commission meeting).

Finance Director Winegardner stated that staff recommends approval of the first reading of Ordinance 2024-21 regarding adoption of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget. This ordinance sets the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget estimated revenues, expenditures, and expenses for the General Fund, the Special Revenue Fund, and the Utilities Fund.

Per State Statute Chapter 200.065, the Town of Lady Lake must hold a public hearing on the tentative millage rate and proposed budget. At this hearing, the Town Commission will amend and approve the first reading of the budget ordinance after adoption of the tentative millage rate. This hearing was advertised via the TRIM notice mailed out by the Property Appraiser and was also advertised in the Daily Sun. The fiscal impact is $41,018,631

Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-21, the adoption of the operating budget for fiscal year 2024-2025; Commissioner Regan seconded.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Nancy Wilson, Town Clerk

Ed Freeman, Mayor