

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

December 10, 2024

A workshop 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.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Freeman called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm. The full commission, the town manager and all department heads were present for this workshop.

AGENDA

Discussion of the Lady Lake Strategic Plan for 2024-2027

Town Manager Lawrence led the introduction stating that this all stemmed from a manager's meeting where we discussed who we are as a town, what are we and where are we heading. We talked about our brand, questioning what it is. A lot of other communities around us, such as Tavares and Groveland, have been engaged in branding and developing an identity. Before we started discussing branding, however, we discussed developing a strategic plan, at which point, we decided to collaborate as a team and develop one. Once we began, it was determined that we needed a facilitator so we engaged the services of Brett Meade to help us focus on the end goal. Brett has over 25 years in law enforcement and holds a doctorate degree in Organizational Leadership. Currently, Mr. Meads serves as Law Enforcement Outreach Coordinator for the University of Central Florida.

Brett Meade – Consultant

Mr. Meade stated that the project took nine months. Very few members of the team had any experience working with a strategic plan so we took baby steps. The first task was to determine the town's values which was discussed over several meetings. Each manager discussed the town's values with members of their staff to include them in the process. Once the values were whittled down to those that best suited our end goal, we moved on to develop vision and mission statements. These components were used to design/develop the 2-to-3-year strategic plan. We wanted to make sure that the goals and objectives were achievable. In conclusion, he was very complimentary of the town's management team adding that the town is well underway to approve a plan that is achievable.

Mayor Freeman mentioned getting rid of acronyms as a positive step and asked that the word "figurehead" be removed when mentioning the role of mayor; he believes it has a negative connotation. He, too, stated that he was amazed at the quality of work that was done by staff.

Commissioner Roberts liked the fact that we are committing to being genuine and honest in the first core value of authenticity, but she questioned why transparency was omitted from the statement since we endeavor to be transparent in our community. Town Manager Lawrence answered that we had several buzzwords among which was “transparency” but we felt that what we ultimately agreed upon best described our town. Commissioner Roberts also mentioned stewardship and how she especially liked it if fiscal stewardship was included; Town Manager Lawrence confirmed that it was. She next mentioned branding, wayfinding and placemaking and told Communications Director Pappacoda that she loves the new utility plant photo and how the article concisely tells the story about how fiscally responsible we were with that project. She suggested doing a better job pushing out information like that to the public so they understand that we are holding to our values. She questioned the budget for branding and asked what kind of research and design Ms. Pappacoda is talking about.

Elisha Pappacoda – Communications Director

Ms. Pappacoda has spoken to organizations that do this professionally and at her last place of employment, they spent over \$20,000 on branding. It came with a particular package that included design but not research. We need the research component because the process to find out who we are and who we are going to be in ten years is challenging in Lady Lake. Whomever we hire will put together committees and perform research to determine who the residents, businesses and employees think we should be then they will start brainstorming about brand. She feels the expense would be money well spent.

Commissioner Regan said the residents have one common goal which is to manage their monthly expenses which includes taxes. There is a wants list and a needs list that needs to be sorted through. Branding is not something residents are concerned about. What is the purpose of establishing an identity or new logo? Town Manager Lawrence responded that with community engagement, we want to be transparent so the community should be involved which will lead to being informed. We want Lady Lake to be known for more than its proximity to the Villages. The town has not done a great job on messaging, branding and identity.

Commissioner Sage agreed with the town manager. He acknowledged the job that Ms. Pappacoda has done on social media and getting the word out about what is going on in Lady Lake. He said that streaming our meetings adds to transparency. He also feels that the town needs an identity. Our parade was far better than the Villages parade and Ms. Pappacoda got the word out. He likes a lot of the Strategic Plan and agrees that we should promote the sewer plant more than we have.

Mayor Freeman commented that the Strategic Plan is a living document and there is nothing that cannot be changed.

Mr. Lawrence stated that it is a draft plan but we ultimately want to make it permanent and he would like to include it on a future agenda.

In response to Commissioner Regan's earlier comment regarding priorities, Mayor Freeman recounted a story about when he first moved to Lady Lake and he drove around to learn about town. On these trips, when entering the town at three locations, he was greeted by very substandard "Welcome to Lady Lake" signs. We should have something much nicer to showcase our town. This is all part of branding and the town needs to embrace this to bring us up to date.

Commissioner Gourlie said there are projects listed in the plan that have already been approved and are underway. What is lacking are more specifics for each project and he thinks those specifics should be included such as the need to purchase property for expansion. His final comment was if you are not growing, you are dying so we should be more forward looking.

In response, Mayor Freeman said the plan is more of a motivational tool and should be thought of as a living document.

Town Manager Lawrence said we are nine months into the plan and he wanted it to be practical and achievable; he said he is not able to state that we need to buy land or build a new police station without more information. There are a lot of unknowns and workshops will be necessary to determine future needs. He used utility plants as an example of why we should not build before the need exists.

C.T. Eagle – Public Works Director

Mr. Eagle stated that if a plant is overbuilt, it will not work. It has happened in Lady Lake twice. Plants are built to handle a certain capacity so they should be neither under nor over built.

Commissioner Gourlie agreed with Mr. Eagle but asked him how he determines when new plants should be built. Mr. Eagle explained the paper and flow capacities which for the new plant is not even at half capacity but with the Hammock Oaks build-out on the horizon they need to plan carefully. In the works is a water, sewer, reuse master plan being conducted by Mittauer & Associates that should be completed in the spring or early summer.

Town Manager Lawrence stated that he is fine with changes and adding more specifics to the plan. Commissioner Gourlie responded that he wants to be a good steward of the town's money and it is always wise to plan ahead; a \$35 million plant today could double in cost so we do not want to wait too long to build.

Commissioner Sage mentioned a developer who showed interest in building a new town center that we could lease. Town Manager Lawrence said he has not discussed the matter

further with Marty Dellebovi from Benchmark but Mr. Dellebovi did express enthusiasm over the prospect of such a project. We could also build ourselves and lease the land; there are pros and cons to owning vs. leasing property. We will also need to look into public/private partnerships.

Mike Burske – Parks & Recreation Director

Mr. Burske said everything is about timing. We will need a new police building and land for a new recreation center but even if the center is never built, we will have the land that could be used for something else. We should be prepared for growth.

John Pearl – IT Director

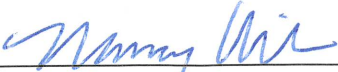
Mr. Pearl said that as part of our process, we engaged in a collaborative effort called SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). This was a precursor to the strategic plan effort. Our main weakness is a lack of community. Identity has to be focused on first in order to build community. Not having a strong identity has consequences for the town. Water Oak has their own strong community and identity as do certain villages within The Villages. Within Lady Lake we have pockets of communities with their own identities who have done their own branding who do not identify first as Lady Lake residents. To address the issue you must have a strong communications program and he thinks we should invest in that more and to continue to invest in events. Once our identity is established, we build a brand around it.

Commissioner Sage said he wants to see a plan that Mr. Dellebovi could come up with for a town square that we would be able to tailor to our interests.

Mayor Freeman said he was very much in favor of the Strategic Plan and excused himself from the meeting due to another appointment.

Mayor Pro Tem Roberts thanked staff for their work over the last nine months. A lot of items in the plan are already well underway. It is a living document so it can morph into what we need it to be. She also believes that community is important.

The meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.



Nancy Wilson, Town Clerk



Ed Freeman, Mayor