



WILDWOOD CONNECTION



COMMISSIONER'S CORNER: MAYOR PRO TEM PAMALA HARRISON-BIVINS

This month, the Wildwood Connection talks with Mayor Pro Tem Pamala Harrison-Bivins as she reflects on 2024 and shares her vision for the future of Wildwood.

As you look back on the past year, what do you see as the city's greatest accomplishments?

There are many—it has been a busy and productive year here in Wildwood.

One accomplishment that stands out is the approval to proceed with design of the recreation center at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park. Recreation programs have been a priority of mine throughout my entire tenure as a city commissioner, and I have always stressed the need to provide recreation and programs for all ages.

The construction and opening of our new Main Street Parking Garage is an accomplishment that is providing immediate benefit to our residents, visitors, and downtown businesses.

We have many small businesses along Main Street, and they have needed additional customer parking for a long time. We have satisfied that need with the completion of the garage and have made our downtown area more attractive to new businesses and redevelopment.

The city's acquisition of the former Christian Worship Center is another significant achievement because it expands our ability to provide additional opportunities downtown.

I am also happy to see progress made on the flooding issues that impact residents in some neighborhoods. While those issues haven't been completely resolved, we are working hard to address the causes and to come up with effective solutions. I hope our residents feel we care and have their needs and best interests at heart.

Describe some of the challenges you've faced as a commission this year.

Flooding. To know we have residents who worry every time we have a rainstorm is disheartening.

The problems are often complex, and answers do not come as quickly as we would like, but we are dedicated to improving the flood areas and the improvements will, hopefully, be seen soon.

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Another big challenge has been balancing utility revenues with the funding of capacity expansion. Our new wastewater treatment facility comes with a very large price tag that has increased significantly since we began planning for it.

We have successfully secured some grants, and continue to seek out others, but some of the capital costs inevitably must be funded by rate increases to maintain the city's financial standing.

While those increases may seem minor to some, for those on fixed incomes, these increases can create challenges.

What would you like to see happen before the end of 2024?

I would like to see the groundbreaking for the Railyard on Main Street. This project is going to bring exciting new options for dining, entertainment, and socializing downtown.

I also would like to see physical progress on new stormwater infrastructure planned for Wildwood's central district and would like to see the office renovations for our parks and recreation staff completed by year's end.

Is there one project or initiative planned for 2025 that stands out most as a priority?

I especially would like to see a ribbon-cutting on the Railyard project and watch the new businesses going into that space open their doors.

What do you see as the city's greatest priorities for the next five years?

I see the recreation center as one of our greatest priorities.

The improvements at Millennium Park are another big priority. I remain deeply committed to providing healthy recreation options for our residents.

Road infrastructure becomes increasingly important as Wildwood grows. The areas west of US 301 are undergoing rapid development and will quickly bring significantly more traffic. We need to remain steadfastly focused on our road improvement projects to add capacity and address the additional wear and tear on our pavement.

While it is not our project, the Florida Department of Transportation's Complete Streets project will provide enormous benefit to Wildwood, especially in our downtown area. I would like to see that design funded and completed during the next five years.

How has Wildwood's growing and diversifying population shaped your views on city priorities?

It has reinforced my insistence on remembering our longtime residents, particularly our seniors who have spent their entire lives here and contributed for decades to Wildwood's growth and development.

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WILDWOOD ESCAPES SERIOUS DAMAGE

City officials reflected on Mother Nature's wrath after Hurricane Helene created havoc along the western coast of Florida and into Georgia and North Carolina.

"We are feeling very fortunate to have escaped widespread damage," said City Manager Jason McHugh. "We are thankful we fared as well as we did, recognizing many other communities are facing far more dire circumstances."

Wildwood's police, public works, and utilities personnel were on duty throughout the night of the storm to respond to public safety and infrastructure needs. A back-up generator at the wastewater treatment facility failed, resulting in a short onsite overflow handled per FDEP protocols, and was replaced with a portable generator. A parks and recreation maintenance shed experienced wind damage, but the equipment it stored suffered no ill effects.

Pumps were placed ahead of the storm as a precaution in case stormwater ponds exceeded capacity, but were not needed.

"Wildwood's workforce is second to none," Mayor Ed Wolf said. "Once again, our employees stepped up to go above and beyond to ensure the wellbeing of our residents. It is reassuring to know they are taking such good care of our entire community."

WELCOME TO WILDWOOD RETURNS IN OCTOBER AS WEBINAR SERIES

Welcome to Wildwood returns this month in a new form.

The overview of municipal government and services that launched last year will be offered in October as a three-part webinar series, enabling the public to participate from any location with a computer or mobile device.

Session One will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2024, and will feature presentations from the city manager, city clerk, finance department, and information technology department.

Session Two will be offered the following Wednesday, Oct. 30, and include presentations from the city's development services, public works, fleet, and police departments.

Session Three will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 6, and will focus on Wildwood's utilities, parks and recreation, and human resources divisions.

All sessions will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. and will be accessible via a link on the city's website. A question-and-answer session will be included in each session, allowing participants to learn more about specific topics of interest.

For more information or to access the link at the start of each session, please go to wildwood-fl.gov.

WILDWOOD ADOPTS FY 2025 BUDGET

At its Sept. 23, 2024, meeting, Wildwood's city commission adopted its millage rate and budget for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1, following the second of two public hearings on the items.

The entire budget can be found on the city's website in an easy-to-view format at www.wildwood-fl.gov/finance.

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As we continue to grow, we must maintain our focus and effectively execute the projects and initiatives we have already identified as priorities. We need to consider how we will remain attractive to businesses who consider starting or expanding here.

We also must prioritize and address affordable housing. We cannot be a city only for the affluent. We need to provide realistic options for professionals in careers that serve and care for the rest of our residents, including those working in retail, food service, maintenance, and lodging, among others.

While these positions often provide lower incomes, they also provide essential services needed to maintain the quality of life that everyone in Wildwood has come to enjoy. It is unrealistic and unfair to expect these employees to live somewhere else while they serve our residents. We need to take the bull by the horns and provide options for them to live where they work so hard to serve others.

What role(s) do you see the city's residents playing in its future?

I see them taking a greater interest in what is happening and already available in the city. At this point, we can offer something for almost everyone in terms of activities and events, and I'd like to see residents participate more in those offerings.

I'd like to see more residents learn about our budget process and attend our meetings, all of which are public. Every person has an opportunity to tell us what they like, don't like, and want to see happen. Look at our meeting agendas, participate in our public forums, and attend our events and activities. Bring ideas and offer suggestions for improvement.

For those who cannot attend meetings in person, there is a virtual option through our "Attend a Meeting Remotely" link at wildwood-fl.gov. Comments can be submitted in writing by mail or email if someone can't or doesn't want to provide them in person.

Where do you feel citizens can be most effective in creating positive change?

The single greatest opportunity I see involves cooperation and participation with our law enforcement personnel. "If you see something, say something" isn't just a catchphrase. Our officers need the public's involvement and partnership to keep our community safe. Crime is on the rise everywhere and Wildwood isn't immune to the country's increasing violence. It is everyone's responsibility to keep our neighborhoods safe. Our police officers can't do it alone.

Who has served as the most prominent role model in your life and what have you learned from them?

My mother. She taught me to treat others with respect and kindness. She was full of wisdom and had a way of helping you navigate life's challenges. She planted wisdom nuggets throughout her life that I still draw from today. I would love to have a conversation with her today and hear her opinions on all the changes we are seeing in the world now.

If you had a magic wand that would change one and only one thing, what would you use it for?

I would dispel racism.

FLORIDA CITY GOVERNMENT WEEK CELEBRATES THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Florida City Government Week will be held Oct. 21-27, 2024. An initiative of the Florida League of Cities, it is organized as a way to celebrate, showcase and engage citizens in the work of municipal government.

The Florida League of Cities is an organization formed in 1922 to promote local self-government and serve the state's diverse municipalities, large and small. The City of Wildwood has long been a member.

The league provides training for local officials in areas such as ethics, risk management, state legislation, Home Rule powers of the state constitution, and provides resources to its members to help each local government best serve its own unique community. It also provides materials for educators to assist in teaching students about government and active citizenship.

The City of Wildwood will kick off this year's Florida City Government week with its inaugural session of Mondays with the Manager, giving residents an opportunity to stop in and visit with the city manager in a relaxed setting without an appointment. (See last page for more information.)



MAIN STREET PARKING GARAGE OPENS

The City of Wildwood celebrated the grand opening of its new downtown parking garage on Sept. 13, 2024, with a ribbon-cutting event on the structure's first level.

The four-level garage houses 126 spaces, including four served by two EV charging stations, and offers free public parking to support the downtown business and municipal district.

"We have witnessed a shortage of parking in this area for some time," said City Manager Jason McHugh. "Wildwood has a multitude of small, independent businesses on Main Street, including retail and service-based companies, all of which stand to benefit immediately from the additional parking for their customers. As the downtown area continues to develop, the additional support infrastructure will be that much more critical."



NOW OPEN

Free public parking is now available at Wildwood's **Main Street Parking Garage**
195 N. Main St., Wildwood, FL 34785



wildwooddowntown.com

WILDWOOD FALL BALL Mondays
MILLENNIUM PARK BALLFIELDS
1300 Huey St., Wildwood, FL 34785

SOFTBALL

Dates:
Mondays
September 23 - October 28, 2024

Times:
8U: 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
10U & 12U: 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Why Join?

- Professional Coaching
- Skill Development
- Team Building
- Fun Activities

Registration:
Free
(Limited Spots)

For More Information:
352-461-0134
Register Online: wildwood-fl.gov
In Person: 6500 Powell Rd., Wildwood, FL 34785

WILDWOOD FALL BALL Mondays
MILLENNIUM PARK BALLFIELDS
1300 Huey St., Wildwood, FL 34785

BASEBALL

Dates:
Mondays
September 23 - October 28, 2024

Times:
6U & 8U: 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
10U & 12U: 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Why Join?

- Professional Coaching
- Skill Development
- Team Building
- Fun Activities

Registration:
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For More Information:
352-461-0134
Register Online: wildwood-fl.gov
In Person: 6500 Powell Rd., Wildwood, FL 34785

Cookie

October 4, 2024
6:30 p.m.

WILDWOOD FLORIDA PARKS & RECREATION

DECORATING



\$35 Per Person **Theme: Fall & Halloween**

All Ages Welcome

WORKSHOP

98 S. Warfield Ave., Wildwood, FL 34785
Please register at www.wildwood-fl.gov
Brought to you by Hannah's Custom Cookies
Call 352-461-0134 for more information

4th Annual
WILDWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT



GOLF

TOURNAMENT

Proceeds benefit Christmas with a Cop shopping experience for local kids

Saturday, October 5, 2024
Southern Oaks Championship Golf Course
766 Marilee Place, The Villages, FL 32163
\$90 per person - \$360 Team

To book tee time call:
(352) 753-6740
Registration opens July 1, 2024

Wildwood Police Department
3939 County Road 462 East
Wildwood, FL 34785
(352) 330-1355

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Find more activities and events on the city's community calendar at www.wildwood-fl.gov/calendar.

OCTOBER 10 2024

FASHIONABLY PINK

Breast Cancer Awareness

FUNDRAISING DINNER & FASHION SHOW

Fashionably Pink




\$10.00/person
All proceeds will support Angel Wigs of Hope.

WILDWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER
6500 Powell Road
Wildwood, FL 34785

8:00 p.m. Dinner/Silent Auction
7:00 p.m. Fashion Show

352-461-0134
www.wildwood-fl.gov

WILDWOOD FLORIDA PARKS & RECREATION

HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR

October 25, 2024, 6:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.
FREE ADMISSION

Bring your little ghouls and goblins out to the Wildwood Community Center Spooktacular!

Trunk-or-Treat, Vendors, Inflatables, Costume Contest

352-461-0134 6500 Powell Road
Wildwood, FL 34785



WILDWOOD FLORIDA

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Code Compliance

October 1, 2024
1:00 p.m.

Local Planning Agency

October 1, 2024
2:00 p.m.

Planning and Zoning

October 1, 2024
2:15 p.m.

City Commission

October 14, 2024
9:00 a.m.

October 21, 2024 (Workshop)
9:00 a.m.

October 28, 2024
7:00 p.m.

Project Review Committee

October 8, 2024
10:00 a.m.

General Information

Unless otherwise specified, all meetings are held at City Hall, 100 N. Main St.

Agendas and minutes are posted on the city's website, www.wildwood-fl.gov. Click on the [Agenda](#) icon to view or download.

Meetings are open to the public. Attend in person or remotely by going to the city website and clicking on [Government > Attend a Meeting Virtually](#).

Anyone wishing to speak during Public Forum should submit a comment card before the meeting begins.



A LOOK AT WILDWOOD HISTORY

This photo from July 1990 shows Mayor Ed Wolf, right, at the Whitetail Rendezvous. Others identified in a note on the back: Alex Ogilvie and Julia Powell.

The photographer is unknown.

NEW: MONDAYS WITH THE MANAGER

Wildwood City Manager Jason McHugh begins a monthly Mondays with the Manager series in October, inviting residents to drop in, ask questions, and engage in a relaxed, informal environment.

"We work hard as a city to be transparent and accessible, and to welcome public feedback regarding everything we do to serve our citizens," McHugh said. "By creating 'open office hours' where anyone can stop by without an appointment, I hope to create more opportunities to interact with residents."

The series kicks off on Monday, Oct. 21, 2024, when McHugh will welcome visits between 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. in Room 124 of City Hall.

Future sessions also will be held on the third Monday of the month. Times and locations will vary to accommodate schedules of the city's diverse population, rotating among breakfast, lunch, and happy hour times of day.

"We always welcome and encourage the public to attend commission meetings," McHugh said, "But sometimes that formal environment isn't comfortable for someone who just wants to ask a question or is looking for help navigating the system. I want everyone to feel welcome and confident that whatever their question or concern, be it large or small, we are here to listen, learn, and help."

CITY INFORMATION

Commission

Ed Wolf
Mayor
ewolf@wildwood-fl.gov

Pamala Harrison-Bivins
Mayor Pro Tem
pbivins@wildwood-fl.gov

Joe Elliott
Commissioner
jelliott@wildwood-fl.gov

Marcos Flores
Commissioner
mflores@wildwood-fl.gov

Julian Green
Commissioner
jgreen@wildwood-fl.gov

City Hall

100 N. Main St.
Wildwood, FL 34785
352-330-1330
www.wildwood-fl.gov
facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida

Directory

City Manager
Jason McHugh
352-330-1332
jmchugh@wildwood-fl.gov

Development Services
352-330-1334

Human Resources
352-330-1340

Parks and Recreation
352-461-0134

Police (Non-Emergency)
352-330-1355

Police (Emergency)
911

Public Works
352-330-1343

Utilities
352-330-1336