

# Foley Newsletter

**MAYOR**

John E. Koniar

**COUNCIL**

J. Wayne Trawick  
Council President  
District 1

Vera J. Quaites  
District 2

Ralph G. Hellmich  
Council Vice President  
District 3

C. Rick Blackwell  
District 4

Charlie J. Ebert III  
District 5

**CITY**

**ADMINISTRATOR**  
Michael L. Thompson

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Congratulations to our newly elected city officials. Ralph Hellmich was elected mayor and brings a wealth of experience to the job. Ralph has served 16 years on the council and many years on the planning commission. This gives him great insight to what is going on in our community and he will hit the ground running.

Wayne Trawick, who has represented District 1 on our city council since 1998, was re-elected. He has served as council president since 2012.

Richard Dayton is a newcomer to the council, but brings a wealth of civic and business experience to the table. Dayton will represent District 3. Council representatives in the other districts were unopposed. They are: Vera Quaites, District 2; Rick Blackwell, District 4; and Charlie Ebert, III, District 5.

South Baldwin Regional Medical Center has announced a \$170 million major expansion and renovation to improve medical services for the growing population of Baldwin County. Patients will experience a facility designed to provide the highest quality care, with entry through a new main lobby.

Plans for the largest building program in the hospital's history include the addition of a 133,433-square-foot, four-story patient tower to the existing structure. The tower will house a new surgical department; a new dedicated outpatient entrance; ten operating rooms, including three with robotic equipment; a new endoscopy center; and a new patient prep and recovery area. The tower's second and third floors will contain nursing units, including a new, larger intensive care unit. The fourth floor will remain a shell space that can be built out based on community need.

Major renovations of existing spaces include



**Mayor's  
Notes**

a new laboratory and expansion of the existing pharmacy and dietary areas.

Construction will take place in phases over a 36-month period once the required state approvals are received.

Hospital officials say that this is the biggest construction project in the hospital's history and it is designed to serve the needs of our community for generations to come.

The Florence B. Mathis Elementary School is now open. Named for Baldwin County's first black female principal, Ms. Mathis was also the first teacher at Aaronville School. Before its opening, Foley Elementary School was the largest in the state. We now have two elementary schools, both providing grades K-6. This is a wonderful asset to our community.

Residential housing remains strong with related construction permits running almost 40% ahead of last year.

ALDI is still coming to Foley, but may be delayed until their new distribution center opens in Loxley. The new Buffalo Wild Wings is well underway in front of PUBLIX on Highway 59.

On a personal note, in November I am leaving Foley as an elected official after 40 years of service, with 26 years on the council and 14 as mayor. I have been blessed to work with wonderful councils and mayors. Our city employees are top notch.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve you.

God bless and stay safe,

**Mayor John Koniar**

# Thank you, John Koniar, for 40 years of service to Foley

John Koniar began his service to the city in 1980 when he was elected to the city council. He served as mayor pro tem from 1996 until 2006, when he was appointed to serve the remainder of former Mayor Timothy Russell's term of office. He was re-elected in 2008, 2012 and 2016, and he has participated in almost every council meeting for the past 40 years. Koniar's calm, steady leadership style included looking for areas of agreement and compromise rather than conflict. His vision and dedication have helped Foley to become the 3rd fastest growing city in our state.

In 1980, Foley was a growing city with 4,000 residents and a budget of roughly \$1.5 million. During Koniar's 26 years as a city councilman, the city swelled to a population of 12,403 by 2006, and the budget soared to \$26.4 million.

Accomplishments during this time included the building of the Riviera Outlet Center (now Tanger Outlet Center), the opening of the Foley Beach Express in 2000, expansion of local industry, and business growth that cemented Foley as the restaurant and retail hub of South Baldwin County.

During his 14 years as mayor, the city continued to be one of the fastest growing cities in the state. Foley expects to have a population count in the ongoing census of close to 25,000 and the budget has grown to just under \$50 million. New roads; Foley's entrance into the sports tourism market, which brings over 150 tournaments to the city each year; the opening of OWA and the securing of national retailers have elevated Foley from a small town into a growing municipality. Downtown revitalization efforts—including the Centennial Tower, pedestrian bridge, rose trail, dog park, downtown flower and streetscape improvements, public parking additions and receiving Main Street designation—show that the city is thriving.

Over the years, Koniar efficiently led the city through crises that ranged from hurricanes, economic downturns, floods and an oil spill to this year's partial closure of the city due to COVID-19.

Koniar has earned his retirement. Not only has he served the city, he is a past chairman of the South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce and the Foley Optimist Club. He also served as a board member



for the Baldwin County Board of Mental Health, The Utilities Board of the City of Foley and the Coastal Resiliency Coalition. He is retired from Vulcan Inc. in Foley.

Koniar will now have more time to enjoy life with his family: wife Linda, three children, five grandchildren, and a large golden retriever named Sadie who thinks she is a lapdog. ■

## Foley nature parks receive \$3 million grant

Gov. Kay Ivey awarded the City of Foley a \$3 million grant to expand and enhance Foley's Nature Parks. The funding, provided by the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act, helps funnel Gulf oil and gas leasing money into coastal restoration projects.

Foley will use the grant to acquire land on the east side of Graham Creek Nature Preserve. This property would be included in the habitat management operations and master planning for conservation practices. Long-term planning includes natural trail systems and access for shoreline fishing. Another proposed land acquisition is south of Wolf Creek Park for protection of a bird rookery.

Park enhancements are also included in the grant funding. These include extending a multi-use path connecting Roscoe Road with Philomene Holmes Boulevard and improving the

southern access road into Graham Creek used by disc golfers and mountain bikers. Wolf Creek Park will receive a restroom facility and a small office for staff.

The largest enhancement for GCNP is a learning pavilion and hydroponics operation. This includes a self-contained hydroponics farm, office, restroom and small greenhouse. Visitors will learn the basics of hydroponics, resource conservation, culture and heritage of farming. The farming pavilion will grow pollinator species and native plantings for habitat gardens and landscaping as well as crops for distribution to food pantries.

Foley is excited to expand and enhance the nature parks with this GOMESA grant. The project will take approximately 12 months to complete, according to Leslie Gahagan, Foley's environmental director. ■

## Safety improvements underway at Co. Rd. 12 and Foley Beach Express

Improvements to create a safer crossing on the Foley Beach Express at County Road 12 are underway. These improvements focus on reducing both risk and accidents at this intersection. The changes will also improve the efficiency of the intersection. The project is expected to be completed in spring of 2021.

The city received a Highway Safety Improvement Program grant from ALDOT of about \$321,500 for the design and

construction of new left-turn lanes that will be offset into the median of the Foley Beach Express. The Foley City Council approved \$956,000 to complete the additional work needed to make this intersection as safe as possible. This includes the design and construction of left-turn lanes on County Road 12, signal and lighting upgrades, and acceleration and deceleration lanes on the FBE. ■

### Check us out online:

[www.CityofFoley.org](http://www.CityofFoley.org)  
[www.VisitFoley.com](http://www.VisitFoley.com)

[www.CoastalAlabamaMarket.com](http://www.CoastalAlabamaMarket.com)  
[www.FoleyLibrary.org](http://www.FoleyLibrary.org)

[www.FoleyRecreation.com](http://www.FoleyRecreation.com)  
[www.GrahamCreekPreserve.org](http://www.GrahamCreekPreserve.org)



## Changing of police chiefs in Foley

Foley’s Police Department recently witnessed a changing of the guard, as Chief David Wilson retired after serving 13 years as chief, and with a total of 37 years in law enforcement. Wilson is replaced by former Deputy Chief Thurston Bullock, who has served in law enforcement for 24 years. Bullock took over official duties on Sept. 1, and becomes Foley’s 7th police chief.

According to Council President Wayne Trawick, Wilson was an asset to the city. “He has left the department in a much better state than he found it, and if that’s not real leadership, then I don’t know what is,” said Trawick.

Bullock stated, “I’m proud to serve. I grew up in the area, in this town, and I’m glad to give back to this family that I grew up in, so it’s a pleasure and an honor to do that.”

Wilson will continue to work part-time with the city as a training specialist. ■

## Seeking additions for Christmas Village

Foley’s Revitalization and Beautification Advisory Board is excited to extend an invitation to businesses, organizations and individuals to add buildings to the Christmas Village display located in John B. Foley Park.

This is an opportunity for others to join the City of Foley as we work to make our town beautiful and festive for the Christmas holidays.

The children in our community look forward each year to the opening of Santa’s Village and the Christmas in the Park event.

If you, your business or club would like to participate by adding to the Christmas Village, please contact Brenda Shambo at 251-943-1545 for further information. ■

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The Community Development Department has been busier than ever, even in these unusual times.

Community Development Department permits  
October 2019–August 2020:

- 550 Single-family—\$102,707,145 valuation
- 1 Duplex (2 Units)—\$164,960 valuation
- 37 Multi-family (60 Units)—\$6,064,560 valuation
- 17 New Commercial—\$19,292,205 valuation

(Includes: Fausak Tires, Calvary Chapel, Dollar General, Buffalo Wild Wings, Expotile, Vosloh building, OWA Water Park foundation, Pit Stop Car Wash, Primland Clubhouse, Symbol/Vulcan, Meadowbrook Apt. Office, Frazier Bait Shop, Tidal Wave Auto Spa, OWA Water Park shell, Take 5 Oil Change)

## Fire safety message

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted our ability to teach hands-on fire safety classes and perform many in-home services like smoke alarm checks, we encourage everyone to continue to practice fire safety every day. This year’s theme for National Fire Prevention Week, October 4-10, is Serve Up Fire Safety in the Kitchen. Please visit the NFPA website at <https://www.nfpa.org/fpw> to get more specific information on kitchen fire safety. As always, please contact our office at 943-1266 if we can be of further help with fire safety tips. ■

## FFD acquires new equipment

The Foley Fire Department recently received donated grain rescue equipment from the Alabama Farmers Co-Op. The equipment is worth approximately \$3,500 and can be housed on the department’s technical rescue trailer. Approximately two years ago, the Alabama Farmers Co-Op began a program to purchase and place equipment throughout the state to help in response to grain entrapment incidents. Rescue crews stand on crates atop the grain when performing rescues. Crews then assemble panels into a tube around the victim and drive them downward into the grain. An auger system is then used to pull the grain out from around the victim. Once completed, the rescue crews are able to deploy ropes and a variety of tools to lift the victim out of the tube. The process requires four to five crew members to be performed properly. We are pleased that we were chosen as the agency to receive this valuable equipment for our area, and we stand ready to assist in these types of special rescues.



The Foley Fire Department recently took delivery of a new 2020 KME Panther Custom Fire Pumper to enhance our fire and emergency response capabilities. This state-of-the-art fire engine has a 1500 gpm pump and 750 gal. water tank. The new Engine 1 is assigned to Fire Station 1 on W. Verbena Ave. in downtown Foley. The total purchase price of the pumper was \$485,000. A full complement of firefighting and rescue equipment has been added, and Engine 1 is now in service for calls. We appreciate the continued support of the mayor and city council in allowing us to maintain a modern fleet of emergency response vehicles in order to better serve our community. ■



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## Nov. 3: Don't forget to vote—and where!

Foley residents will return to one of three traditional polling places for the federal election on Nov. 3: Foley Civic Center, Foley United Methodist Church or Graham Creek Nature Center. Residential address determines voting location. To determine your voting location visit [myinfo.alabamavotes.gov/voterview](http://myinfo.alabamavotes.gov/voterview). ■

## Upcoming Events

All events are subject to change due to COVID-19 regulations.

**Foley Events Updated Daily** [VisitFoley.com](http://VisitFoley.com)

**Foley Public Library** [FoleyLibrary.org](http://FoleyLibrary.org)

**Foley Senior Center** [CityofFoley.org](http://CityofFoley.org)

**Foley Sports Tourism** [FoleySportsTourism.com](http://FoleySportsTourism.com)

**Graham Creek Preserve** [GrahamCreekPreserve.org](http://GrahamCreekPreserve.org)

### Coastal Alabama Farmers and Fishermens Market

Local produce, fresh seafood, homemade goods and more. Open Sat. 9 a.m.–2 p.m. 20733 Mifflin Rd.

### Observe and Explore Days

First Wednesday and third Saturday each month, 10 a.m.–noon. Free activities for children 10 and under. Graham Creek Nature Preserve, 23460 Wolf Bay Dr., Foley. [grahamcreekpreserve.org](http://grahamcreekpreserve.org)

### Oct. 3 Kiwanis Poker Run

All proceeds go to charity. Begins and ends in Heritage Park. 10 a.m.–3 p.m. [www.foleykiwanisclub.com](http://www.foleykiwanisclub.com)

### Oct. 6 Shred It Day

3–5 p.m. behind City Hall. [VisitFoley.com](http://VisitFoley.com)

### Oct. 29 Foley Halloween Drive-In Movie

2019 animated movie *The Addams Family*.

Virtual Costume Contest. Watch for details. [VisitFoley.com](http://VisitFoley.com)

### Nov. 13–Dec. 23 53rd Annual Trim-a-Tree Marketplace

A dazzling display of unique Christmas ornaments, decorations and gifts, all created by local artists and members. Presented by the Foley Art Center. Located in Suite 182 of Tanger Outlets. Mon.–Sat. 10 a.m.–7 p.m., Sundays 11 a.m.–6 p.m. 251-943-4381. [facebook.com/FoleyArtCenter](http://facebook.com/FoleyArtCenter)

### Nov. 7 Annual Foley Rotary Oyster Run

A 5K course beginning and finishing at Orange Blossom Square starts at 8 a.m., followed by a 1-mile Fun Run for ages 10 and under beginning at 9 a.m. [VisitFoley.com](http://VisitFoley.com)

### Nov. 17 Creek Crawl Obstacle Run

The 4-mile course traverses the habitats of Graham Creek Nature Preserve, with challenges including mud runs and mud crawls, climbing obstacles and cross country trails. 8 a.m.–11 a.m.

Graham Creek Nature Preserve  
23460 Wolf Bay Dr., Foley  
[grahamcreekpreserve.org](http://grahamcreekpreserve.org)

## Why you need flood insurance

Flooding is the most common and costly natural disaster in the United States, affecting every region and state. Floods cause physical and emotional anguish, as well as financial devastation. In fact, just one inch of water in an average-sized home can cause more than \$25,000 in damage.

Federal disaster assistance is not always the answer. Most types of federal disaster assistance require a presidential disaster declaration and come in the form of low-interest disaster loans that must be repaid—with interest!

Only flood insurance reimburses you for flood damage, providing the necessary funds for recovery—and you don't have to pay it back.

Call your insurance agent today to ask about the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). There is no better way to protect the life you've built. To learn more, call the NFIP Help Center at 800-427-4661 or visit [FloodSmart.gov](http://FloodSmart.gov). ■