

# Foley Newsletter

## MAYOR

Ralph G. Hellmich

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## CITY

## ADMINISTRATOR

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Hello, all. I certainly hope everyone's summer is going well. It's back-to-school time even though summer here in the South will continue for a couple more months. This summer has been a big success here in Foley with a lot happening.

Our road projects continue to move forward. The extensions of South Pecan Street and Juniper Street are progressing. Our Juniper project has been delayed by a backup in the mast arm signals for the intersections, even though the material was ordered at the beginning of the project. We hope to complete that project in a couple of months.

Repaving of the Foley Beach Express and finishing touches to the County Road 12 intersection at the FBE are just waiting for the go-ahead from the Alabama Department of Transportation. Our Highway 59-12 Intersection upgrade and the TAP Sidewalk Grant project on 9th Avenue are also waiting on ALDOT signoff to start.

Our three downtown improvements at Pine Street, Heritage Park and the Rose Trail are all but complete. Bids have been received for our Public Works Campus, so we should start construction soon. The Community Library project final design is close to completion and construction should start in January 2024.

The new Kids Park is open and well received. Other park restroom upgrades are also in progress. I am happy to announce we have purchased a 4-acre parcel on Bodenhamer Road to be the new Mills Community Park. We will work with the community on the design and use of the new park.

Our Pickleball Complex is starting construction, with nine courts planned at the new facility next to the Coastal Alabama Farmers



## Mayor's Notes

and Fishermens Market. Work has begun on the road going to the park as well as lighting and sidewalk upgrades for the site. These infrastructure upgrades will also help support the new J1 Project jointly being developed by OWA, Hoeltz Co. and the City of Foley.

We have partnered with the Baldwin County Board of Education to help upgrade and light some of the areas around Foley High School.

This partnership will allow space for the city's recreational leagues and save money for both entities.

I want to congratulate our Mainstreet folks who have just completed the Envision Downtown plan that helps focus efforts to make our downtown the best in Baldwin. We are already seeing results with the new restaurants and shops downtown. I would love to list them, but space is short. When you have a chance, visit and see all the new faces of our businesses.

Drainage is always an issue in our city. Our area is flat and, as I am reminded, water only runs downhill. Upgrades are a constant for our city. When citizens know of problems, we encourage them to let us know. Some of our older areas are a particular challenge because when our city was young, today's construction standards did not exist. We are always working to improve these conditions.

Just a reminder for all that we are in the heart of storm season. We should all be ready for the worst while hoping for a storm-free year. Our city is prepared and we want you to be, as well.

Mayor Ralph G. Hellmich

# Foley gets \$5 million for major Graham Creek expansion



Foley will be adding a large amount of property to the city's Graham Creek Nature Preserve, greatly increasing the size of one of the largest municipal environmental centers in Alabama.

Governor Kay Ivey announced Friday that the city will receive \$5 million in state funding through the national Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act. The grant was included in \$67 million in state funding announced for the program this year.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said the grant will be a major benefit for the city and environmental protection.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for us to expand the Graham Creek Nature Park and to increase the quality of life for our citizens," Hellmich said. "This is a significant improvement for Foley and for our work to protect the

Wolf Bay area."

The Graham Creek Preserve is now about 660 acres. The grant will allow the city to purchase the additional acreage to the southeast of the current preserve.

The goal of the land use will be conservation with habitat restoration and management as well as some public access in the future for passive recreation.

The Graham Creek Nature Preserve, located near Wolf Creek Drive in southeast Foley, now includes 10 miles of hiking trails, two handicap-accessible boardwalks, a kayak launch and four disc golf courses.

The GOMESA program shares revenues from offshore oil and gas leases in the Gulf of Mexico with four participating states: Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. ■

## Foley studying effects of an entertainment district

Local officials, business leaders and residents are looking at the creation of an entertainment district as a way to increase business and improve nightlife in downtown Foley.

Many cities in Alabama, including Orange Beach, Mobile, Birmingham, Huntsville and Montgomery, have entertainment districts where restaurants and bars can remain open later than in other areas and entertainment options such as outside music performances are offered.

Darrellyn Dunmore, executive director of Foley Main Street, said creating an entertainment district has improved downtown business in many communities in the region. She said crime rates have not gone up in those areas.

"The truth of the matter is the law is still the law," Dunmore said. "People will have to abide by the law even in an entertainment district."

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said Foley already has an entertainment district at the OWA Park and Resort, and that not only has the district been good for business but there has been no issue with increased crime rates. He said Orange Beach's entertainment district at The Wharf has also gone well.

He stated that while a downtown Foley district would mean some bars and restaurants will remain open later than currently allowed, he did not see the area becoming similar to Mobile or New Orleans.

Project supporters want to increase opportunities for entertainment, but also want to preserve the nature of the downtown area.

"The bigger problem we've got is to make sure that we can modify the traffic, the 10 million cars that go through Foley every year," Hellmich said.

With that in mind, traffic and parking in and around the potential entertainment district are important topics being considered by the planners. ■

## Foley leads area in population growth

Foley's population grew by 2,979 between 2020 and 2022, an increase that tops any other city in the Mobile Bay area and most other communities in the state, according to a report by the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.

In 2022, Foley had 23,577 residents to rank 27th on the list of most populous cities in Alabama. Fairhope, with 282 more residents, ranked 26th.

Foley's growth rate of 14.47%, according to the PARCA report, was based on recent U.S. Census data. The statistics show an increase of 1,454 residents from 2020 to 2021 and an addition of 1,525 between 2021 and 2022.

Foley's numerical increase was the

largest in Baldwin County.

Two municipalities with smaller populations had higher percentage increases. Silverhill led the state with an increase of 72.2% between 2020 and 2022, growing by 574 from 795 to 1,369, according to the PARCA report. Loxley grew by 764 residents, from 3,840 to 4,604 between 2020 and 2022, a rate of 21%.

The next highest increase in both numbers and percentage was in Daphne, which added 1,989 residents over the two-year period. The city's population grew by 8%, from 24,981 to 26,970.

Other Baldwin cities grew at a rate between about 2% and 7% in the same period. ■

Want to stay up to date with Foley, Alabama news? Visit [cityoffoley.org/news/](https://cityoffoley.org/news/)



You can also follow us on Facebook (City of Foley Municipal Government) and Instagram (@cityoffoley).



# Foley to improve, use FHS athletic fields

An agreement between Foley and the Baldwin County Public School System will improve local school athletic fields and give city recreation teams more locations on which to play and practice.

The Foley City Council and Baldwin County Board of Education both approved the agreement. Under the agreement, the city would pay the cost of installing more lights and bleachers at the Foley High School practice fields. City teams would be allowed to use the sites when the fields are available for the next 20 years.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said the agreement helps both the city and school system. He said the school will have lights and bleachers that can be used for school activities and the city will not have to build new fields.

"The neat thing about this is now we don't have to deal with that," Hellmich said. "By partnering with them, it helps them. It helps us."

The estimated cost for the lights is about \$350,000. The bleachers are expected to cost about \$100,000. ■

## New Foley Kids Park opens

Foley's \$1.2-million Sara Thompson Kids Park opened Saturday, May 27.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said the park has much more to offer than parks that older residents might remember from their childhood.

The new park features slides of all shapes and sizes, unique swings, places to climb and tunnels to explore, all built on a kid-friendly surface. Shade structures have been included, and the location is surrounded by a soon-to-be permanent fence.

Hellmich praised the work done by city employees in getting the park built and open in time for the Memorial Day weekend.

"I'd like to thank all the departments in the city, and special thanks to the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Department for the demolition, preservation and construction assistance with our wonderful new park," Hellmich said. "They worked really hard to get this done today."

The park replaces the Kids Park that was built in 2001.

The Foley City Council voted in May 2023 to name the new park for Sara Thompson, a second-grade teacher at Foley Elementary School. Her students helped organize the effort to build Foley's first Kids Park in 2001.

The Sara Thompson Kids Park is located near the Max Griffin Park Pool and the Foley Skate Park on West Verbena Avenue. ■

## Senior Center announcement



The Foley Senior Center would like to welcome our new administrative assistant and fun enforcer, Nancy McMeek, to our staff. Nancy will be helping out with all the activities at the center, from planning social events to coordinating day trips and ensuring a great time is had by all. Please stop by and introduce yourself during any one of the Senior Center's events. For a full listing of activities, check out our webpage, [cityoffoley.org/senior-center](http://cityoffoley.org/senior-center), and follow us on Facebook: **Foley Senior Center**. ■

## ADEM Burn Ban

The Foley Fire Department reminds you that the annual Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) Burn Ban for Baldwin County is currently in effect in an effort to improve air quality. Open burning of debris is prohibited until Nov. 1 with only a few exceptions (recreational/ceremonial/cooking fires, agricultural/silvicultural burns). These exceptions may also be restricted by the fire chief via a local burn ban when drought or weather conditions make it necessary.

## Working Smoke Alarms Save Lives

The Foley Fire Department reminds you to make sure your smoke alarms are operational. This means testing smoke alarms monthly and replacing batteries twice a year or when a low-battery alarm chirps. Smoke alarms over 10 years old should be replaced. Reminder: A smoke alarm disabled because of nuisance alarms provides no protection at all.

## Storm Preparedness and Safety

As we are now in another potentially active hurricane season, the Foley Fire Department reminds you to stay alert and prepared for storm events. Please download a reliable weather app for your mobile devices or purchase a weather radio with local alerts. We remind you to only use generators in well-ventilated outdoor areas, never inside the home or closed garage. Also, working carbon monoxide detectors are important when running generator engines for extended periods of time near the home, especially during overnight hours. If you are purchasing a new portable generator, look for current models that have an automatic shutoff carbon monoxide sensor.

Contact our office at 251-943-1266 for more information on these items, and turn your attention to fire prevention! ■

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT FY 2022/23 Annual Report (Oct. 2022–June 2023)

- 288 Single-family Permits  
\$63,020,539 Valuation
- 28 Duplex/Multi-family Permits  
\$36,242,224 Valuation
- 19 New Commercial Permits  
\$14,612,103 Valuation  
(Firestone, Foley Dental Office, Discount Tires)
- Commercial Addition/Remodel Permits  
\$89,875,312 Valuation
- 2,475 Total Permits  
\$230,739,677 Valuation

Third in the nation in FORTIFIED construction.

Visit [cityoffoley.org/Community-Development](http://cityoffoley.org/Community-Development) or call 251-952-4011 for more information. ■



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## Upcoming Events

**Foley Events Updated Daily** VisitFoley.com

**Foley Public Library** FoleyLibrary.org

**Foley Senior Center** CityofFoley.org

**Foley Sports Tourism** FoleySportsTourism.com

**Graham Creek Preserve** GrahamCreekPreserve.org

### Foley Public Library

New hours: 9 a.m.–7 p.m. Mon.–Thurs.;  
9 a.m.–5 p.m. Fri.–Sat. Monthly programs,  
Makersaurus Time, adult arts and crafts, family  
bingo night, lunch and learns and other clubs.

### Downtown OWA

Live shows: Brandon Styles, magician/  
comedian and other special events.  
For info and times: VisitOWA.com.

### 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.  
CoastalAlabamaMarket.com

### Foley Senior Center

Adults over 50 meet at the Foley Senior  
Center every 1st and 3rd Saturday evening  
with live entertainment for dancing. Doors  
open at 6:00, band begins at 6:30. \$7 per  
person. Bring refreshments of your choice.

### Aug. 3–5 Jennifer Claire Moore Foundation Annual Rodeo

Robertsdale Arena  
Gates open at 5:30 p.m.  
www.jenniferclairemoorefoundation.com

### Aug. 12 Jamaica Day

3–6 p.m., Foley Public Library  
FoleyLibrary.org

### Aug. 25 & Sept. 27 Art Walk

5–9 p.m. Downtown OWA.  
VisitOWA.com

### Sept. 3 Labor Day Celebration

Fireworks, car show, music and more!  
VisitOWA.com

### Sept. 16, 23 & 30 Island Movie Night

Free, family-friendly series of movies.  
VisitOWA.com

### Oct. 7 Oktoberfest

5k fun run, live music, dancing and  
entertainment.  
VisitOWA.com

### Oct. 5–7 Collegiate ASA Tournament

23030 Wolf Bay Dr., Foley  
GrahamCreekPreserve.org

### Oct. 4, 11, 18 & 25 Midday Melodies

11 a.m.–2 p.m. in Heritage Park.  
VisitFoley.com

### Oct. 12 Shred It Day

3–5 p.m., behind the Foley Civic Center.  
VisitFoley.com

### Oct. 12–15 50th Annual National Shrimp Festival

10 a.m.–10 p.m., Gulf Shores Public Beach  
MyShrimpFest.com

### Oct. 13, 14, 20, 21, 27, 28 Haunted Forest

7–10 p.m., 23030 Wolf Bay Dr., Foley  
GrahamCreekPreserve.org

### Oct. 20 Chicago Street Supper Club

6–10 p.m.  
Tickets must be purchased in advance.  
SouthBaldwinChamber.com

### Oct. 21 Pumpkin Play Day

10 a.m.–12 p.m.  
GrahamCreekPreserve.org

### Oct. 21 Stan Mahoney Youth Fishing Tournament

Weigh-in at noon, Pirate's Cove Marina.  
WolfBayWatershedWatch.org

### Oct. 21 Halloween Extravaganza

4–6 p.m., Foley Public Library  
FoleyLibrary.org

### Oct. 26 Hometown Halloween

5:30–8 p.m., Downtown Foley  
VisitFoley.com

### Oct. 28 Foley Witches Ride

4–10 p.m., Downtown Foley  
VisitFoley.com

### Nov. 10–Dec. 23 Trim-A-Tree Opening Day

Tanger Outlet Mall, Suite 230  
Mon.–Sat. 10 a.m.–7 p.m.,  
Sun. 11 a.m.–6 p.m.  
Foleyartcenter.com or Facebook

### Nov. 11 Chocolate and Cheese Festival

10 a.m.–6 p.m.  
Heritage Park

### Nov. 18 Harvest Festival

9 a.m.–2 p.m.  
CoastalAlabamaMarket.com

### Nov. 18 Tree Lighting Ceremony

Enjoy a snowy, family-friendly event.  
VisitOWA.com