

# Foley Newsletter

## MAYOR

Ralph G. Hellmich

## COUNCIL

J. Wayne Trawick  
Council President  
District 1

Vera J. Quaites  
District 2

Richard Dayton  
District 3

C. Rick Blackwell  
District 4

Charlie J. Ebert III  
President-protempore  
District 5

## CITY

**ADMINISTRATOR**  
Michael L. Thompson

407 E. Laurel Ave.  
P.O. Box 1750  
Foley, AL 36536

(251) 943-1545  
(251) 952-4014 - fax

[www.cityoffoley.org](http://www.cityoffoley.org)



I hope you are enjoying the delightful spring weather here in Foley. This season is perfect for getting out in the great outdoors, and I'm excited to share that we have some wonderful local events lined up for early May.

First, the 20th Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival, hosted by the South Baldwin Chamber, is set to take place at OWA during the first weekend in May. This is a fantastic opportunity for all of us in Foley to witness the wonderful sight of hot air balloons filling our skies, weather permitting. I encourage you to keep an eye to the sky that weekend and visit the event's website for more details.

Mother's Day weekend marks another long-time tradition in our community with Art in The Park. Hosted by the Foley Art Center, this event brings talented artists from around the region to our very own downtown park. It's an excellent opportunity to find a special Mother's Day gift and enjoy quality time with loved ones. May is also the time the city sponsors Music and a Movie events in the park.

In other city news, I am pleased to announce the opening of the Juniper Street extension. This new roadway will enhance north-south access through Foley, offering an alternative to Highway 59 and the Beach Express. This is part of our ongoing efforts to improve traffic flow and accessibility for all residents.

We have also seen progress with the road extension projects along South Pecan and North Pecan streets, and there are more developments on the way. As we approach the summer, please



## Mayor's Notes

remember that the Foley Beach Express will be undergoing widening and repaving work. I urge everyone to drive with extra care and courtesy during this busy season.

I am pleased to report positive feedback from our Strategic Plan public meetings. Your engagement is helping shape the future of Foley, ensuring that we are well prepared for growth and development.

Additionally, the City Council has recently approved \$1 million in funding for sidewalk improvements aimed at increasing pedestrian safety around Foley High, Foley Elementary, Mathis Elementary and along Highway 59.

The design phase for our new library/community center is nearly complete. This new facility will be a significant upgrade from our current library and will cater to our growing community's needs. We expect to start bidding on this project this summer.

Last, construction on the new Public Works Campus on Poplar Street is currently ongoing. This development represents a major advancement for our city's infrastructure with an estimated completion in late Fall of 2024.

Thank you for your continued support and involvement in our community's growth. Together, we are making Foley a better place for everyone.

Mayor Ralph G. Hellmich

# Foley seeking World War II memories

The city of Foley is seeking residents' memories and memorabilia of World War II to create a museum exhibit and other displays commemorating the era.

The National Park Service recently named Foley a World War II Heritage City. Only one community in each state or territory will receive the designation.

The program recognizes communities that made contributions to the war effort and that continue to recognize the sacrifices made by veterans and those on the home front during World War II.

To commemorate the designation and the contributions made to the war effort in South Baldwin County, the city is preparing an exhibit at the Foley Railroad Museum. The exhibit will highlight Barin Field, wartime events in Foley and the contributions made by residents during the conflict.

Barin Field was established by the Navy in 1942 as an auxiliary training center for the Pensacola Air Station.

Residents who might have information about these periods, including those who served at Barin Field or whose family



**Foley residents and Barin Field Navy personnel attend an event at the community's USO Club on Aug. 22, 1944. The building is now the Gift Horse Restaurant.**

members were stationed at the site, can share those memories by contributing to the exhibit.

Anyone with memorabilia from Barin Field or other aspects of World War II can also share those with the community by contacting exhibit organizers.

Items being sought include uniforms, hats, insignia, letters, photographs, medals, souvenirs or other material that could be used in the display telling the story of Barin Field and Foley during the conflicts.

Original photographs and letters can be scanned and returned to the owners. Other items that might be used in the exhibit could be loaned to the city for the display.

Anyone wanting more information or who might wish to loan or provide material for the exhibit can contact Guy Busby, Foley marketing communications manager, at [gbusby@cityoffoley.org](mailto:gbusby@cityoffoley.org), or 251-504-3759. ■

## Parker recognized for more than 45 years serving library

Kathleen Parker was recently recognized for more than 45 years of service to the Foley Public Library.

The City Council recognized Parker with a proclamation commemorating her work for the library and citizens of Foley.

Parker served on the Foley Library Advisory Board from 1971 until she stepped down in 2024. Mayor Ralph Hellmich said Parker helped the library grow from a small building at the corner of McKenzie Street and Laurel Avenue to the current two-story facility that is now in the process of being replaced by a new larger center.

"That's an incredible time for serving on anything, but on a library board. You helped build the one that's over there and then oversaw an expansion. Now you've seen laying the groundwork for yet another vision being fulfilled," Hellmich said.

In 1978, she was appointed head of the Building Committee, which laid the groundwork for the construction of the current library. ■



## New surgery center proposed for Foley

An ambulatory surgery center is planned in Foley near the site of the expanding South Baldwin Regional Medical Center.

The Foley Planning Commission voted in its March meeting to recommend approval of the project. The proposal will go to the Foley City Council for final approval at a future date.

The center will be built by Community Health Services, which operates South Baldwin Regional Medical Center. The new facility will be located on a 1.5-acre site on North Alston Street.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said construction on the center is expected to start later this year.

"This is very critical," he said. "It will allow people to receive outpatient services. It allows the expansion of surgery opportunities. This is another development that has more doctors looking to move to Foley."

The SBRMC is conducting a \$250-million expansion project that will increase the hospital's capacity to 142 beds.

In 2023, the Foley City Council created a medical overlay district in the area around the SBRMC. The district will support the expansion of services in the area around the growing hospital.

Hellmich said the district, expanded hospital and projects such as the surgery center and medical offices will bring more specialists and other medical services to Foley.

"Now, folks who live in South Baldwin and Foley won't have to drive to Mobile or Pensacola. We may be able to see somebody right here in Foley," Hellmich said. "We'll have a Class A hospital, South Baldwin Regional Medical Center, that is rated as one of the best hospitals in Alabama." ■



## Longtime public servant John Koniar dies

Foley commemorated John Koniar for his decades of public service as mayor, City Council member and community leader.

Koniar died March 22. He served as mayor from 2006 until 2020 and as a City Council member before that, starting in 1980.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich, who was elected to the office after Koniar retired in 2020, said his predecessor set an example for all officials and citizens of Foley.

“Mayor Koniar’s service to our city over 40 years was second to none,” Hellmich said. “With honor, caring and integrity he helped lead our city to be as progressive as we are now. He cared greatly for our employees and placed our citizens first. We all offer our condolences to his family and will honor him for his outstanding service to Foley.”

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey authorized flags in Foley to be flown at half-staff in recognition of Koniar’s service.

“John Koniar dedicated much of his long life to public service. In addition to wearing the uniform of the United States Air Force, during which time he honorably served in Korea, he spent nearly four decades as a successful businessman. For many, that would be enough, but not for John. For 40 full years, he quietly took on the additional roles of city councilman, and finally, mayor of Foley. During his time in office, he shepherded the city through unprecedented growth and economic development. His many leadership accomplishments—frankly, too numerous to mention—transformed Foley into one of Alabama’s premier cities in which to live, work and recreate. He will be sorely missed,” Ivey said.

Some achievements in Foley during Koniar’s tenure included the Alabama 59 pedestrian bridge, the Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival, the Foley Depot Museum and Archives, OWA, Graham Creek Nature Preserve, Coastal Alabama Farmers and Fishermens Market, the Foley Event Center and the expansion of sports tourism. ■

## Foley police revamping social media platform

The Foley Police Department has begun to revamp its social media platform in late March.

The project’s goal is to build relationships, inform the public and bring an excitement back to law enforcement careers. Recruiting is the key. The department is looking to engage the community, letting all age groups know who the department is and what they do.

These platforms will help build a better relationship with citizens as well as provide information on scams, display events, and share news with the Foley community quickly.

The Foley police annual report is on all social media platforms. Anyone who is interested in learning the data recorded by and for the department over the past year is welcome to examine the 2023 Annual Report. ■

## Fire Department Reminders

The Foley Fire Department reminds you that the annual Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) Burn Ban for Baldwin County goes into effect May 1 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.

As we enter the summer months, we remind you to prepare for hurricane season and other severe weather events. Please download a reliable weather app for your mobile devices or purchase a weather radio with local alerts. Contact our office at 251-943-1266 for more information on these items, and turn your attention to fire prevention! ■

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

FY 2023/24 Annual Report (Oct. 2023–March 2024)

- 299 Single-family Permits—\$98,035,486 Valuation
- 314 Single-family Rentals—\$53,510,295 Valuation
- 116 Multi-family Permits (501 Units)—\$83,195,885 Valuation
- 8 New Commercial Permits—\$21,731,000 Valuation (includes Cobblestone Inn & Suites, Ocean Marine)
- 29 Commercial Addition/Remodel Permits—\$4,105,166 Valuation
- 3,395 Total Permits—\$278,189,669 Valuation
- 3rd in the nation in FORTIFIED construction

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



407 E. Laurel Ave.  
P.O. Box 1750  
Foley, AL 36536

## Upcoming Events

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)

### 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](http://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](http://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.

### May 2-4 Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival

A family-friendly event with tethered balloon rides, balloon glows, balloons in flight, artisan and food vendors and live music! Downtown OWA. [gulfcoastballoonfestival.com](http://gulfcoastballoonfestival.com)

### May 3, June 7 & Aug. 2 Guided Golf Cart Tours at Graham Creek Nature Preserve

Reservations required. Please call 251-923-4267. [GrahamCreekPreserve.org](http://GrahamCreekPreserve.org)

### May 7 Baldwin County Youth Orchestra Spring Concert

7 p.m. Foley Civic Center  
Free spring concert featuring Classic Favorites. [VisitFoley.com](http://VisitFoley.com)

### May 11 Mustang & Mega Car Show

9 a.m.–4 p.m. Downtown OWA  
[VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com)

### May 11 FoleyCon 2024

10 a.m.–5 p.m. Foley Civic Center  
Small-town “comic con” focused on video game/sci-fi/fantasy hobbies and games.

### May 11 Graham Creek's Annual Creek Crawl

7 a.m. Graham Creek Nature Preserve  
Adrenaline-pumping 4-mile obstacle course. [GrahamCreekPreserve.org](http://GrahamCreekPreserve.org)

### May 11-12 52nd Annual Art in the Park

Over 100 juried fine artists and craftsmen. Live entertainment on Sat. John B. Foley Park

### May 17, 24 & 31 Heritage Park Marketplace

Fridays 4–7 p.m. Heritage Park. Offers a variety of arts and crafts, handmade items, plants and much more. [VisitFoley.com](http://VisitFoley.com)

### May 17, 24 & 31 Music and a Movie

Music at 6 p.m., movie at dusk in Heritage Park. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs and enjoy free live entertainment and a movie under the stars. Food trucks and concessions. [VisitFoley.com](http://VisitFoley.com)

**May 25 Memorial Day Fireworks at OWA**  
8:50 p.m. Downtown OWA.  
[VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com)

### June 15 5th Annual Corn Festival

9 a.m.–2 p.m. Coastal Alabama Farmers and Fishermens Market. Seasonal flavor, delicious sweet corn, kids' activities and a corn-eating contest. 20733 Mifflin Rd. [CoastalAlabamaMarket.com](http://CoastalAlabamaMarket.com)

### July 6 4th of July Celebration and Fireworks

Celebrate Independence Day with family-friendly activities and live entertainment in Downtown OWA, followed by an epic fireworks show at 8:50 p.m. [VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com)

### July 13 Sweet Grown Alabama Day

Open Sat. 9 a.m.–2 p.m. 20733 Mifflin Rd. [CoastalAlabamaMarket.com](http://CoastalAlabamaMarket.com)

### July 27 Island Day at OWA

Downtown OWA.  
[VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com)

### July 26 Casino Night Fundraiser

Foley Civic Center  
[sbchamberfoundation.org/casino-night-fundraiser](http://sbchamberfoundation.org/casino-night-fundraiser)

### July 27 Graham Creek Water Day

10 a.m. Come play in the water. [GrahamCreekPreserve.org](http://GrahamCreekPreserve.org)