

Foley Newsletter

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Hello, everyone. I hope you all fared well during our recent “Snowmagedden.”

As I write this a few days later, it’s a beautiful sunny day of 70 degrees. That’s our Gulf Coast weather.

I would like to compliment our first responders and public works personnel on their dedication to public safety during our historic snowfall and cold. They worked throughout the event making sure that our city was covered.

Roads were cleared and emergency services provided. Our region is not used to those types of events, but Foley reacted well—including the citizens who heeded the advice to not take risks.

Spring is not far off. Mardi Gras and Easter are close by with spring break soon to follow. Please note upcoming events on our city’s Visit Foley website (visitfoley.com) for what’s happening around our area.

You may notice many projects happening in Foley or nearby. Intersections are being improved at Highway 59 and County Road 12 as well as County Road 12 and County Road 65.

In town, road projects include work on East Jessamine Avenue, Pilgrim Street and Bullard Avenue. Several sidewalk projects have begun around the city and construction will continue throughout the year.

We recently broke ground on our new Library-Community Center. Our Public Works campus building progress is going well.

We have more than 50 projects in progress between Infrastructure and Parks and Recreation. For example, work on our Pickleball/Sand Volleyball complex is moving forward.

We continue to work with our state and local partners on roads and intersections. In the coming



Mayor’s Notes

year, you will see improvements to the Hickory and Michigan intersection, the start of the West County Road 20 extension, and work along the County Road 65 corridor.

Work also continues on the new Publix grocery store complex on the Foley Beach Express. The anticipated opening is near Memorial Day. A Doc’s Seafood Restaurant at County 20 and South Juniper Street, the Goodwill store on East Azalea and

the First Watch Restaurant on Highway 59 are all moving forward.

The long-awaited downtown Colt Grill successfully opened. More projects are coming in the upcoming months. We are working diligently to bring businesses to town while supporting our current business community so that our citizens have what’s needed for their lives.

A big congratulations goes out to our Foley High School for winning the A+ School of Excellence Award. As recognized by the State Board of Education, FHS was No. 1 in improvement in High Schools for Advanced Placement. The hard work of the students, teachers and staff, with support from the Baldwin County Board of Education, is certainly commendable.

The City of Foley will continue to partner with the BCBOE to help make our schools the best they can be.

I hope everyone enjoys the last of our winter as we go into spring.

Mayor Ralph G. Hellmich

Foley employees praised for snow response

While many offices were shut down, Foley employees—including fire, police and public works workers—turned out to clear roads and respond to emergencies during the severe winter weather.

About 10 inches of snow fell in Foley on Jan. 21. The snowfall closed roads throughout the region for several days.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said workers from several city departments worked throughout the situation to keep roads open and respond to emergencies.

“We’ve never seen anything like that around here,” Hellmich said. “I want to commend public works. I want to commend our emergency responders, fire and police. They worked throughout the entire event. They went on calls. They did things to

protect our citizens.”

Hellmich said Foley Public Works Department crews kept many roads cleared even though the city does not have equipment designed to remove snow and ice.

“Within a day, most of the major roads were clear. Within two days, even a lot of the side roads were cleared,” Hellmich said.

From the time snow began to fall on Jan. 21 until the morning of Jan. 24, Foley firefighters responded to 30 incidents.

One structure fire destroyed the residence. Foley crews were challenged with fighting the fire with heavy snow on the ground.

Foley police responses included 19 fire-medical assistance calls, 14 accidents and one disabled vehicle. ■



Foley firefighters battle a structure fire during the snowfall that hit the area on Jan. 21. Police, fire and public works employees worked throughout the event, responding to emergencies and keeping roads open.

Work begins on new Foley library



Foley city officials and other dignitaries break ground for the new Foley Public Library. The 40,000-square-foot building on East Orange Avenue is scheduled for completion in 2026.

Construction is starting on the new Foley Public Library that will double the size of the facility.

The city held a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday, Jan. 30, for the library at the building's site on East Orange Avenue. Mayor Ralph Hellmich said the event was a great day for the city.

“As we stand here at the site of what soon will be our new library and community center, we are not just breaking ground on a building,” Hellmich said. “We are laying the foundation for a future where ideas can grow, where minds can be nurtured, and where every individual, regardless of age or background, has access to the tools they need to succeed.”

The two-story library will have about 40,000 square feet of space. The new center will include a sensory room, separate children's and teens' activity

areas and a large multi-purpose room that seats 277. Other facilities planned for the new library include a STEAM-STEM lab and spaces for programs such as special-needs activities.

The building will also feature a second-story porch that overlooks the Wilbourne Antique Rose Trail and the city's Dog Park.

Hellmich said city officials and project supporters have been working for several years to bring the project to the start of construction.

“This project was started three years ago,” Hellmich said. “I would like to commend our team from the city of Foley engineering, our committee that worked on this, all of the folks, particularly David Thompson (executive director of leisure services), Kate Norris (library director) and our library folks for their input into this library.” ■

Foley celebrates progress in 2024

From construction of a new library center to completion of the Public Works campus, Foley will continue major projects in the upcoming year.

In his annual State of the City presentation, Mayor Ralph Hellmich said Foley made major accomplishments in the last year and many more projects are planned.

Hellmich said work is officially scheduled to start in February on the new library after bids on the project came in under budget. Work continues on the complex that will house Foley's Public Works and Sanitation Department.

Foley will continue to improve roads and sidewalks around the city. In the last year, the city opened the South Juniper Street extension, which allows traffic to move between U.S. 98 and Baldwin County 20 without having to use Alabama 59 or the Foley Beach Express. Foley is improving pedestrian travel around the city. Approximately \$1 million was invested over this past year on sidewalk construction, and another \$1 million is budgeted for the current year.

Other accomplishments include the purchase of a World War II Navy training aircraft, continuing the city's work to educate the public about Foley's role in wartime aviation instruction. The National Park Service designated Foley as an American World War II Heritage City. The city opened a museum exhibit commemorating the designation and the Navy training center at Barin Field.

The mayor said Foley is expanding the police and fire departments to meet the growing needs of the city. ■



Buildings light up downtown Foley

Downtown Foley now shines with strings of LED lights lighting up the outlines of the city's historic buildings.

During Foley Main Street's monthly Third Thursday event on Jan. 16, lights placed on downtown building facades were turned on at 6 p.m.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said the lights are part of the continuing effort to show residents and visitors the attractions of downtown Foley.

"It's just another way that we're continuing to improve our downtown," he said. "The city, our businesses and Foley Main Street have done a great job improving this vital area of Foley and this is another way to help show that off to people."

Since fall, Foley business owners have been placing strings of lights on downtown buildings. The city provided the lights and automatic sensors used to turn the illumination on and off at sunset and sunrise.

At a discussion of the project earlier in the month, Wayne Dyess, Foley executive director of infrastructure and development, said the lights will help create a downtown environment that encourages economic development without making changes to Foley's many historic buildings.

He said many historic Southern cities, such as Charleston, South Carolina and St. Augustine, Florida, have similar lighting projects.

Also, Colt Grill Barbecue and Spirits Restaurant opened Jan. 16 in the 1925 Foley Bakery building, one of downtown Foley's historic buildings. ■

Foley among top growth cities in U.S.

Foley is in the Top 10 among the fastest growing cities in the United States, according to a national study.

The U-Haul Growth Index, which analyzes one-way customer moves over the last year, found that Foley was 10th in the country in growth rates among cities.

Foley had the highest growth rate of any city in Alabama. The next highest was Auburn in 12th place, followed by Huntsville in 14th. No other Alabama cities were included in the Top 25.

Foley's population was 20,335 in the 2020 census. The current population is estimated to be about 26,500.

The U-Haul study found that 53.1% of the company's traffic coming into Foley was coming into the city, while 46.9% was going out of the community. Arrivals were up 5% in 2024, while departures were down 2%. Other Baldwin cities, including Fairhope and Daphne, have also had significant growth rates.

Ocala, Florida was the fastest growing city in the study. The study also listed the Top 25 metro areas with the fastest growth rate. Dallas, Texas had the highest growth rates among metropolitan areas.

The U-Haul Growth Index is compiled from more than 2.5 million one-way truck, trailer and U-Box portable moving container transactions that occur annually in the U.S. and Canada. ■

Winter Fire Safety

As we are still in the winter weather months, we remind everyone to practice fire safety when using space heaters in their homes. Unfortunately, we have already responded to several residential fires this year as a result of space heaters. Make sure that you have and practice a fire escape plan for your family, and remember that WORKING smoke alarms save lives. Test your smoke alarms routinely, and replace batteries when needed. All smoke alarms have a rated service life of 10 years.

With a couple of months left to burn vegetative debris before the annual ADEM burn ban takes effect on May 1, we remind all of those property owners in the City Limits of Foley that a burn permit is required in order to open burn yard debris. Please contact our office (251-943-1266) to see if you meet the requirements for a permit or have other questions. ■

New Fire Extinguisher Training System



The Foley Fire Department recently took delivery of a Lion Bullseye Digital Fire Extinguisher Training System. This system is a great addition to our fire prevention and safety program as it allows us to teach students of all ages the proper methods of using a fire extinguisher. The digital system allows us to train indoors without the mess of real extinguishing agents and actual fire. The purchase was budgeted and approved by the city council at a total cost of \$21,467. ■

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

FY 2024/25 Report (Oct. 2024–Dec. 2024)

- 72 Single-family Permits
\$23,542,622 Valuation
- 7 Multi-family Permits
\$25,737,250 Valuation
- 3 New Commercial Permits
\$4,580,000 Valuation
- 22 Commercial Addition/Remodel Permits
\$2,431,707 Valuation
- 716 Total Permits
\$71,792,533 Valuation
- 3rd in the nation in FORTIFIED construction

Visit 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.

Feb. 22 Coastal Garden Festival

9 a.m.–2 p.m. 781 Farmers Market Lane Coastal Alabama Farmers and Fishermens Market.

Feb. 22 Annual Arbor Day Celebration

1 p.m. A tree dedication ceremony and celebration of Foley as a Tree City. One free tree per family. Coastal Alabama Farmers and Fishermens Market.

March 1 Foley Mardi Gras Parade

11 a.m. Family-friendly parade in Downtown Foley.

March 2 Mardi Gras Parade & Party

11 a.m.–5 p.m. Mustangs, classic cars and more! Pre-register or register the day of the show. VisitOWA.com

March 5, 12, 19 & 26 Midday Melodies

11 a.m.–2 p.m. Bring your lunch and come listen to live music in Heritage Park. Details at VisitFoley.com or call 251-943-1200.

March 8 BBQ & Blues Cook-Off

11 a.m.–4 p.m. Enjoy live blues music, arts and crafts, children's activities, and the delicious, finger-licking, grilled concoctions from competing BBQ teams! Heritage Park. Tickets: FoleyBBQandBlues.net.

March 22 Book Launch & Signing: Colleen Coble & Rick Acker

10 a.m. Join *USA Today* best-selling author Colleen Coble and Rick Acker for a book launch, talk and signing at the Foley Civic Center. FoleyLibrary.org

March 29 Elberta Sausage Festival

8 a.m.–5 p.m. Join us for Elberta's famous German sausage and sauerkraut, plus music and over 200 arts and crafts booths.

April Saturdays Downtown Foley Walking Tours

10 a.m. Enjoy a free guided tour of downtown Foley each Saturday in April. Wear comfortable walking shoes for the one-hour tour that highlights Foley's historic buildings. Foley Welcome Center.

April 5 Mudbugs & Margaritas Festival

10 a.m.–6 p.m. Enjoy unique, tasty crawfish dishes, margaritas, live music and more. Tickets at the gate. Heritage Park.

April 12, 13, 19 Bunnies & Baskets

Fun and photo opps.
VisitOWA.com

April 18 Music and a Movie

Music 6 p.m. Movie at dusk. For entertainment and movie selections, go to VisitFoley.com.

April 18 Library Easter Egg Hunt

10 a.m. FoleyLibrary.org.

April 19 Graham Creek Easter Egg Hunt

10 a.m. Graham Creek Nature Preserve, 23460 Wolf Bay Drive

April 22 Shred It Day

3–5 p.m. Behind City Hall. VisitFoley.com

May 1-3 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.

May 11 Creek Crawl

A four-mile course of mud, water and other obstacles. Sign up at crawlcreek. itsyourrace.com. 23460 Wolf Bay Drive

May 10-11 Art in the Park

More than 100 artists with hand-crafted art and gift items. John B. Foley Park.