

Foley Newsletter

MAYOR

Ralph G. Hellmich

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Council President
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District 2

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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



I'm glad to welcome springtime in Foley! A lot is happening in our area, from festivals to projects, so let's jump right in.

Publix, our newest grocery retailer, will open sometime in June at the corner of the Foley Beach Express and County Road 20. Our newest restaurant, First Watch, is now open, while Doc's Seafood is moving toward completion. The two newest hotels, The Fairfield Inn and Cobblestone Hotel & Suites, are also close to the finish line.

Several City projects are in progress. The Public Works Campus and our new library are underway. We are now in the design stage for upgrading South Chicago Street leading into the new library site. The Heritage Park/East Jessamine Street upgrade should be completed by the time this newsletter is delivered. These renovations of the east side of the park tie in with a pedestrian walkway that provides for safer foot traffic from the middle/elementary school area, across Jessamine east, and all the way to the City Hall campus.

Pedestrian safety is an ongoing effort across our city. New solar-powered pedestrian crosswalk signals will be added to newly installed four-way stops for pedestrian safety. Foley has recently been awarded a Highway Safety Improvement Program Grant to assist with this. Crosswalks will be upgraded along Highway 98 at Cedar, Oak, Pine and Chicago streets, and the Rose Trail Crossing. The almost \$900,000 grant will greatly enhance our citizens' ability to walk around town.

The joint City/ALDOT Project at the Highway 59 and County Road 12 intersection is well on its way to completion in midsummer. This will allow a smoother flow of traffic at that intersection.



Mayor's Notes

Several road projects that are not actually in the city limits also will have a positive impact on residents. Thank you to the Baldwin County Commission for addressing several of these locations. This includes the County Road 12/65 intersection, upgrades to the Hickory Street/Michigan Avenue intersection, West County Road 20 to County Road 65, and the Cedar/Michigan intersection. We expect others to be announced soon.

The Council approved \$1 million in the current budget to design and build sidewalks that will improve connectivity all around Foley. Sidewalk projects are now underway in the Mills Community, on North Cedar Street and on West Peachtree Avenue. These projects will help connect outer areas to our schools and the rest of the city.

These projects are just a sample of many. We are constantly planning to meet the city's needs, both for today and into the future. Please be patient, as these important projects take time.

The list of projects for the next few years include a new civic center, a year-round indoor aquatic center, a larger senior center, a performing arts center, and an expanded justice center. Foley's Council and I are honored and excited to be able to serve and work together to accomplish these goals.

Enjoy this beautiful weather and the wonderful place we live. Remember to shop local!

Mayor Ralph G. Hellmich

Foley airport holds open house



Residents tour the Foley Municipal Airport during an open house at the facility on Saturday, March 22. More than 100 people participated.

Foley's municipal airport was on display for the public March 22 as residents had a chance to take part in an open house showing off the facility.

About 100 people took part in the open house Saturday morning. Participants asked questions about airport activities and operations.

One resident said she lives next to the airport and has wanted to look over the facility.

"This is so nice to be able to come out here," she said. "I've wanted to come out, but I didn't want to interrupt anyone while they're working

out here. Everyone's very nice and you have a wonderful place here."

Lightning Aviation, the company that oversees the airport, hosted the open house.

The Foley Municipal Airport has a 3,700-foot runway extending north and south. The facility offers flight instruction, aircraft maintenance, aircraft rentals and other services.

The airport is located at 510 Airport Drive near Underwood Road, Baldwin County 24, about five miles from the Tanger Outlet Center and about 15 miles from the beach. ■

Heritage Park, Jessamine improvements near completion

A new walkway now under construction will provide pedestrian access from Highway 59 across Heritage Park to City Hall.

The project will provide walkways, columns and access, Mayor Ralph Hellmich said.

"That is starting at the clock tower with a walkway that crosses the park with a gateway entrance on the east side," Hellmich said. "This will complete the park on all four sides. We will carry that project to pave Jessamine eastward over to City Hall. This will provide a nice walkway all the way to City Hall."

The project includes a gate and wall section to be built on the east side of the park at the intersection with Jessamine Avenue. Pavers will be placed between the gate and the Centennial Clock on the west side of the park.

Crews poured concrete for the new sidewalk extending from the clock tower to Jessamine Avenue. Now, workers will grade the rock to prepare for paving and place brick pavers across Chicago Street. Paving will be followed by the placing of signs and crosswalks.

The city is also replacing existing wooden light poles that hold halogen lighting on the south side of the park with decorative black poles holding LED lights. The LED lights are more efficient and will provide more illumination.

Benches and litter receptacles will be placed after the decorative lighting is installed.

Other Foley projects in the area include crosswalk improvements on U.S. 98 at Chicago Street, the Wilbourne Rose Trail, Pine Street, Oak Street and Cedar Street. ■

Foley sets district boundaries for 2025 elections

Foley has set City Council district boundaries in preparation for the 2025 municipal election.

Cities must redraw district lines to accommodate population changes before each municipal election. The new boundaries are intended to establish five districts with similar populations.

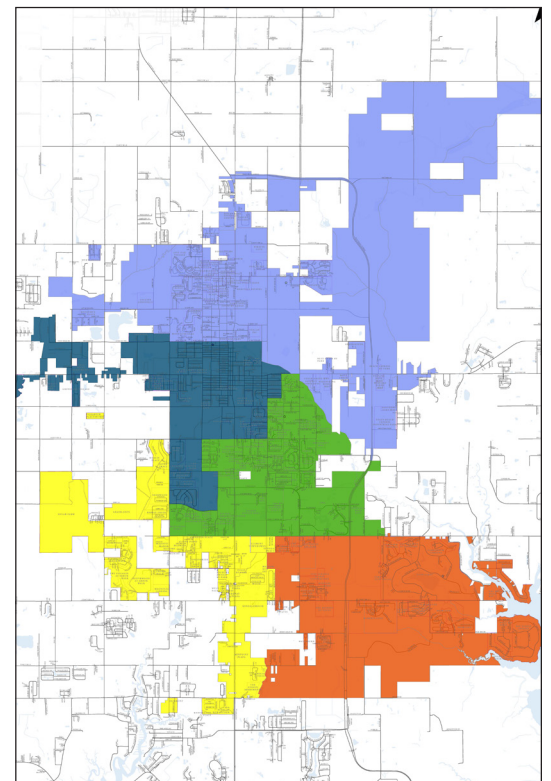
Municipal elections in Foley and most other Alabama cities and towns will be held Aug. 26, 2025. If a runoff election is needed for any office, that election will be held Sept. 23, 2025.

The council also returned the voting location for the city election to the Foley Civic Center. The polling place was at the Event Center in 2020 to allow for social distancing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Foley voters will cast ballots in the City Council race in their district. All city voters will be able to vote in the race for mayor.

In Foley, the office of mayor and the seats to represent the five City Council districts will be up for election. The term of office is four years.

In 2021, the Alabama Legislature extended the terms for municipal offices by one year so that elections would not be held the same year as presidential or state elections. ■



New boundaries for Foley City Council districts were set to allow all five districts to have similar populations.

Foley releases new financial report

Current information on Foley finances is now available online and in some municipal offices.

The new edition of the Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) updates information through the fiscal year that ended in September 2024. The report is a user-friendly summary of Foley's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.

The PAFR includes information on the city's revenue and spending in the last year.

The total revenue into the Governmental Account was about \$85 million. That total was an increase from the income in 2023.

The city received the largest portion of its income from sales taxes. Foley brought in \$40.25 million in sales and use taxes, 53.4% of the city's total revenue.

The largest expense in the 2024 fiscal year was for capital projects. The city invested \$25 million in projects, including road improvements, improvements to parks and recreation facilities and land purchases. The second greatest expense that year was \$18 million for public safety.

The report also includes general information on Foley and its changes in recent years.

Foley's median family income increased almost 38% between 2020 and 2023, from \$40,614 to \$60,090. In that period, the community's unemployment rate dropped from 5.6% to 2.9%.

The city maintains 164 miles of streets and 40 miles of sidewalks. The city also maintains 3,104 street lights.

In the last fiscal year, the Foley Police Department received 24,634 calls for service. The Foley Fire and Rescue Department responded to 3,000 emergency calls.

The Foley Public Library circulated 335,140 items to 126,634 patrons.

A copy of the PAFR is available online at cityoffoley.org/finance. ■

Foley rebuilding urban tree canopy

New trees are being planted to restore Foley's urban forest damaged almost five years ago by Hurricane Sally.

Large areas of Foley's tree canopy were affected when the hurricane smashed into the city in September 2020. Foley lost about 40% of its tree canopy in the storm, according to city estimates.

Now, city crews are planting trees in locations such as the southwest corner of Alston Street and Section Avenue. Before the project began, the bare lot was bordered by a small stream that runs into the headwaters of Wolf Creek.

The Foley City Council approved the launch of a long-term effort to restore the city's urban forest. The Public Works Department, with support from City Horticulturist John Graham, recently completed several tree planting and landscape enhancement projects.

The trees planted at the site were selected to provide year-round color, seasonal interest and suitability to site conditions. Bald cypress were planted in low-lying areas to aid stormwater absorption. Other trees include northern red oak, magnolia, yellow poplar, magnolia, wax myrtle and live oaks.

Foley Mayor Ralph Hellmich said the effort is part of the city's broader commitment to enhancing the community.

"Foley is focused on making smart, long-term investments that not only replace what was lost, but create stronger, more beautiful places for our residents," Hellmich said. "This corner at Alston Street and Section Avenue is a great example of how strategic, well-designed improvements can serve multiple purposes, such as improving environmental function, strengthening neighborhood identity, and elevating quality of life. Small, consistent, incremental projects like this—carried out over time—can lead to meaningful, positive change for the entire community." ■

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! ■

Graham Creek More Accessible Thanks to Wheelchair-Friendly Golf Cart



The Graham Creek Nature Preserve has become more accessible to people who utilize wheelchairs thanks to a new golf cart. The cart was purchased in part through grant funds from the Gulf Coast Resource, Conservation, and Development Council. City of Foley Sustainability and Natural Resources Director Leslie Gahagan said the cart will help more people explore the beauty of the preserve. ■

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

FY 2024/25 Report (Jan. 2025–March 2025)

- 64 Single-family Permits
\$21,912,235 Valuation
- 1 Multi-family Permit
\$5,500,000 Valuation
- 2 New Commercial Permits
\$1,550,805 Valuation
- 13 Commercial Addition/Remodel Permits
\$2,431,707 Valuation
- 616 Total Permits
\$57,676,588 Valuation
- 4th in the nation in FORTIFIED construction

Visit 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
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.
781 Farmers Market Lane
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 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.
gulfcoastballoonfestival.com

May 6 Baldwin County Youth Orchestra Spring Concert

7 p.m. Foley Civic Center
Free spring concert featuring classic favorites. VisitFoley.com

May 9-10 FoleyCon 2025

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

May 10 Graham Creek's Annual Creek Crawl

7 a.m. Graham Creek Nature Preserve
Adrenaline-pumping 4-mile obstacle course.
GrahamCreekPreserve.org

May 10-11 53rd Annual Art in the Park

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

May 16, 23 & 30 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

May 24 Memorial Day Fireworks at OWA

8:50 p.m. Downtown OWA.
VisitOWA.com

June 14 9th 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.
781 Farmers Market Lane
CoastalAlabamaMarket.com

Love living in Foley?

Consider volunteering! There are opportunities across the city: at the library or model train exhibit, driving the event train, at Graham Creek Nature Preserve and various city boards. Call 251-943-1300 for details.

July 4-6 4th of July Weekend Party

Celebrate Independence Day with family-friendly activities and live entertainment in Downtown OWA.
VisitOWA.com

July 26 Sweet Grown Alabama Day

Open Sat. 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
781 Farmers Market Lane
CoastalAlabamaMarket.com

July 27 Island Day at OWA

Downtown OWA.
VisitOWA.com

July 25 Casino Night Fundraiser

6–10 p.m. Foley Civic Center
sbchamberfoundation.org/casino-night-fundraiser

Aug 2 Graham Creek Water Day

10 a.m. Come play in the water.
GrahamCreekPreserve.org

Aug 10 End of Summer Bash

Downtown OWA.
VisitOWA.com