Foley Newsletter

MAYOR
Ralph G. Hellmich

COUNCIL
J. Wayne Trawick
Council President
District 1

Timothy "Tim" Lower
District 2

Roderick Burkle
District 3

Larry Engel
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

Mayor's Notes

Hello, Foley! The Christmas season is upon us. It looks to be a busy time.

By now, everyone should have heard the tremendous news of the schools here in Foley. All six schools in the Foley feeder pattern scored a B. In 2022, Foley partnered with the Baldwin County Board of Education to create a joint effort called the Foley Education Advisory Committee (FEAC). The purpose of the FEAC is to assist the principal of each school in helping students achieve success. This year's grade is an indication of the direction of all our schools. The partnership with the Board of Education is a success. Our county school system was already the best in the state. The leadership of the board in partnering with Foley cannot be understated. The real heroes, however, are our principals, teachers, staff and students who work every day to achieve success.Our City Council and I congratulate all who help reach this new standard in our Foley schools. Thank you, all!

As I mentioned, the Christmas season is here. Our celebration kicks off the first weekend in December with the Friday night Christmas in the Park when we light our Foley Tree. On Saturday, the celebration continues with the Christmas Parade in Downtown, ending with the park festivities. Our parade is always the biggest of the year. Just a reminder to everyone that it's so important to shop local. This supports our local business community. These businesses provide jobs. They are our neighbors. They help support our community in times of need and provide the revenue to our city that allows us to serve our citizens' everyday needs.

As usual, we are busy with our city projects that address our growth and maintain our quality of life. You might notice the sidewalk projects, such as North Cedar Street, and road improvements on Pilgrim Street and at the intersection of Hickory and Michigan. Our city building projects are also moving forward. The two big ones are the Public Library and Public Works Campus. Both are scheduled to be done after the new year begins. New businesses are also under construction, such as the Camp Out and the BJs Wholesale Store.

Growth is always a buzz word of either concern or hope for the future. Our city's growth this past year is down for several reasons. Residential homes are down 65% back to the pre-Covid years. Our moratoriums on subdivisions and zoning have allowed us to upgrade our already stringent requirements. The zoning moratorium will expire in January, with our upgrades completed by then.

I pray everyone has a wonderful holiday season. Please drive safely and watch out for your neighbors. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Mayor Ralph G. Hellmich

New Foley City Council takes office

Foley's incoming and returning elected officials took office Nov. 3 as the new four-year terms for mayor and City Council began.

Three of the five council members were elected in 2024. Timothy "Tim" Lower will take office as the District 2 council member. Roderick Burkle is the District 3 representative. Larry Engel was elected to the District 4 seat on the council.

Burkle was appointed in October to fill the remaining weeks in the term of Richard Dayton, who died in August.

The council recently recognized Dayton's service during his term in office.

Two incumbent members also returned for new terms. Wayne Trawick will continue as District 1 representative. Charles Ebert III will begin another term as the District 5 council member.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich, who was elected without opposition, was also sworn in for his second term.

In recent meetings, the council also recognized outgoing members Vera Quaites and Rick Blackwell. Both members were elected in 2008.

After being sworn in, current members selected Trawick to continue serving as council president and Ebert to continue as council president pro tempore to preside over meetings. The council also set rules of procedure for the new term, appointed council representatives to city boards and the Planning Commission and designated the depositories for city funds.

Also during the meeting, city judicial officials, executive directors and directors were sworn in for new terms. ■

Foley moves ahead with first responder safe room

The Foley first responder safe room is expected to start construction in early 2026 and be completed before the start of the 2027 hurricane season.

Foley first responders should have a safe location to ride out hurricanes or other disasters before the 2027 storm season, following action by the City Council.

The city is seeking bids to build the facility. Plans call for the safe room to be about 10,000 square feet in size, with a capacity of up to 200 people. The building will be constructed to withstand winds of up to 200 miles an hour.

The facility will also be equipped with a 400-kilowatt generator that can run on either natural gas or diesel fuel. The building will also include kitchen facilities and everything needed to house personnel during an emergency.

Mike Thompson, city administrator, said the project should be completed by 2027.

Thompson said that while the safe room is designed as a location where first responders can ride out storms and be ready to be deployed after the event, the facility will also have other purposes.

Most of the cost of the project will be paid with money from a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Foley officials have been working with FEMA on the project since Hurricane Sally struck the Alabama Gulf Coast in 2020.

The Foley safe room will be built on city property on North Poplar Street, north of the site where the Public Works campus is under construction and south of East Berry Avenue. ■

Foley acquires property near Heritage Park

The recent acquisition of downtown property will allow Foley to expand services with more city facilities.

The Foley City Council approved the purchase of more than 2 acres on East Violet Avenue north of Heritage Park. The parcel, known as the Gatlin Property, is located east of the Wilbourne Antique Rose Trail.

Foley officials are studying uses for the acquired property that include the site of a new civic center and a city museum.

City plans call for the current civic center to be replaced with a larger facility.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said the current facility, built in the 1970s, no longer meets the needs of the city. He said plans call for most of the large oak trees on the site to be preserved.

The city is also considering plans to build a museum to commemorate Foley's designation as an American World War II Heritage City by the National Park Service. Only one city in each state or territory can receive the AWWIIHC designation.

The museum would commemorate Barin Field, which opened in 1942 as a Navy training base in Foley, and the community's role in World War II. ■

Foley plans to expand Graham Creek Nature Preserve

Foley's Graham Creek Nature Preserve is working toward a major expansion after the city recently received major environmental grants.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration approved $4 million to buy property to expand the 650-acre city facility, already the largest municipal nature preserve in Alabama. The funding source was the Coastal Zone Management Habitat Protection and Restoration Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, known as the BIL.

Leslie Gahagan, Foley sustainability and natural resources director, said the city has been working with NOAA on the project for more than a year.

Mayor Ralph Hellmich said Foley's funding is the first NOAA grant approved for Alabama.

Foley will also receive $1.5 million for additional nature parks expansion under funding announced by Gov. Kay Ivey. The funding is one of 23 Coastal Alabama projects that will receive more than $45 million through the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006, known as GOMESA. ■

Public works crews compete in Equipment Rodeo

Using heavy equipment to balance a bowling ball or hit giant inflated balls like a golf putt were some of the ways South Baldwin public works crews competed to show off how local employees can use their skills for public improvements.

The first Baldwin County Municipal Equipment Rodeo took place Friday, Sept. 26, at the Graham Creek Nature Preserve in Foley. Crews from three cities—Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach—took part in the first event.

Orange Beach took first place in the competition, followed by Foley and Gulf Shores.

Darrell Russell, Foley public works director, said departments from different cities often work to assist each other during emergencies and at other times when help is needed. Events such as the rodeo allow crews to meet and learn from each other.

Competitions included using the boom of a mini-excavator like a giant golf club to hit a ball into a target. In other events, competitors used a skid-steer, a small tracked vehicle with blades like a forklift, to pick up and move a bowling ball and to balance a basketball mounted on a pallet. ■

F.Y.I.

Fire Department reminders

Fall/Winter Fire Safety

As we are in the fall season and the holidays are near, the Foley Fire Department reminds you to practice fire safety in all of your fall and winter activities. This includes proper use and display of decorations, heating equipment/fireplace safety, and cooking safety. We also remind you to install and keep working smoke alarms in your homes, and replace those batteries when needed. Smoke alarms have a rated life of 10 years, so replace older alarms for the best protection. This year's NFPA Fire Prevention campaign, "Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home," seeks to educate everyone about using these batteries safely. The campaign stresses how important it is to BUY, CHARGE, and RECYCLE safely when it comes to lithium-ion batteries. We encourage you to visit the NFPA website at https://www.nfpa.org/Events/Events/Fire-Prevention-Week/ About to learn more about these fire safety tips.

Open Burning

As of November 1, the annual ADEM ban on open burning has expired. However, a burn permit from the Foley Fire Department is required by City ordinance for any open burning of debris within the Foley city limits. Several conditions must be met in order to obtain a permit. The debris must be vegetative or untreated wood, and the location of the fire must be at least 500 feet from any structure or public road. The use of portable or fixed outdoor fireplaces is allowed without a permit, provided they are at least 15 feet away from a structure. For areas outside of the Foley city limits, a local permit is not required for open burning, but notifications should be made to our office (251-943-1266) and/or Baldwin County 911 (251-947-4911). The same criteria for debris and distances apply per Alabama Department of Environmental Management regulations in these areas. Contact our office at 251-943-1266 for more information on these items, and turn your attention to fire prevention! ■

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

FY 2024/25 Report (July 2025–Sept. 2025)

- 105 Single-family Permits
  $34,813,384 Valuation
- 3 New Commercial Permits
  $5,731,773 Valuation
- 9 Commercial Addition/Remodel Permits
  $1,249,800 Valuation
- 721 Total Permits
  $49,007,985 Valuation
- 4th in the nation in FORTIFIED construction

Visit cityoffoley.org/Community-Development or call 251-952-4011 for more information. ■

Want Foley news quicker?

Sign up for email newsletters that are delivered monthly: cityoffoley.org/mayors-newsletters

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: 8:30 a.m.–7 p.m. Mon.–Thurs.; 8:30 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 Ln. 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.

Nov. 14–Dec. 23 *57th Annual Trim-a-Tree*
Tanger Outlets. Open daily. Unique Christmas gifts from more than 150 local artists and craftsmen. FoleyArtCenter.com

Dec. 5 *Christmas in the Park*
6–8 p.m. Stroll through the park and enjoy the lights, Christmas Tree Lane, Christmas village and Santa! Heritage Park. VisitFoley.com.

Dec. 5 *Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra Presentation*
7 p.m. Accomplished young musicians from across the Gulf Coast perform a beautiful holiday concert. $5 suggested donation. Foley Civic Center.

Dec. 6 *Foley Christmas Parade*
10 a.m. Enjoyed by young and old, the parade includes music, floats, tractors and even a glimpse of Old St. Nick.

Dec. 6 *Let It Snow*
11 a.m.–3 p.m. Fun activities, music and photo ops in Heritage Park. More details to come. VisitFoley.com

Dec. 6 *Downtown Foley Christmas Fest*
11 a.m.–3 p.m. Christmas specials in stores throughout Downtown Foley. FoleyMainStreet.com

Dec. 6, 12–14, 19–21 *The Christmas Trail*
5–8 p.m. Snow Princesses (5–6 p.m.), Santa Claus (6–8 p.m.), Christmas lights & hot chocolate. $5 per person. Children 2 and under are free. 23030 Wolf Bay Dr., Foley. grahamcreekpreserve.org

Dec. 8 *The Baldwin Pops Christmas Concert*
7 p.m. Join us for a magical evening full of holiday spirit at the Foley Civic Center! Benefiting Toys for Tots. An unwrapped toy is suggested for admission.

Dec. 11 *Christmas Night Market*
5–8 p.m. Holiday shopping, pictures with Santa, one-of-a-kind artisan creations, delicious baked goods and much more. CoastalAlabamaMarket.com

Dec. 18 & Jan. 15 *Third Thursdays*
5–7 p.m. Explore Downtown Foley while businesses offer tastings, art, special deals, and more! FoleyMainStreet.com

Dec. 22 *Storytime with Santa & Craft*
10 a.m. FoleyLibrary.org

Dec. 22 *Library Kids' Christmas Party*
5:30 p.m. Story with Santa, Christmas crafts, hot chocolate bar, cookie station, crafts & games at the Foley Civic Center. FoleyLibrary.org

Jan. 13 *Foley Snowbird Welcome Coffee*
9 a.m.–12 noon. The City of Foley and the South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce will host a Snowbird Welcome Coffee at the Civic Center. Free coffee and doughnuts. www.VisitFoley.com

Jan. 23 *Family PJ & Movie Night*
5:30–7:30 p.m. Bring your stuffed animals and leave them for a Stuffed Animal Slumber Party. Kids can watch a video of their pet's Library adventures. Stuffed animals can be picked up the next morning at our 10 a.m. Storytime & Craft. FoleyLibrary.org