



WILDWOOD CONNECTION

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

As 2024 begins and we all set our sights on what it may bring, it is also worth looking back—not just to celebrate our accomplishments, but to reflect on our challenges and what we've learned from them.

When I became a Wildwood commissioner in 1975, or even when I was first elected as the city's mayor in 1986, I never imagined the growth we would experience or the decisions we would now face as elected officials.

The 1990 U.S. Census measured our population just shy of 3,500 residents; last year, the University of Florida estimated we had a little more than 30,000 permanent residents. That's up 23 percent from the year before and 93 percent from the 2020 Census.

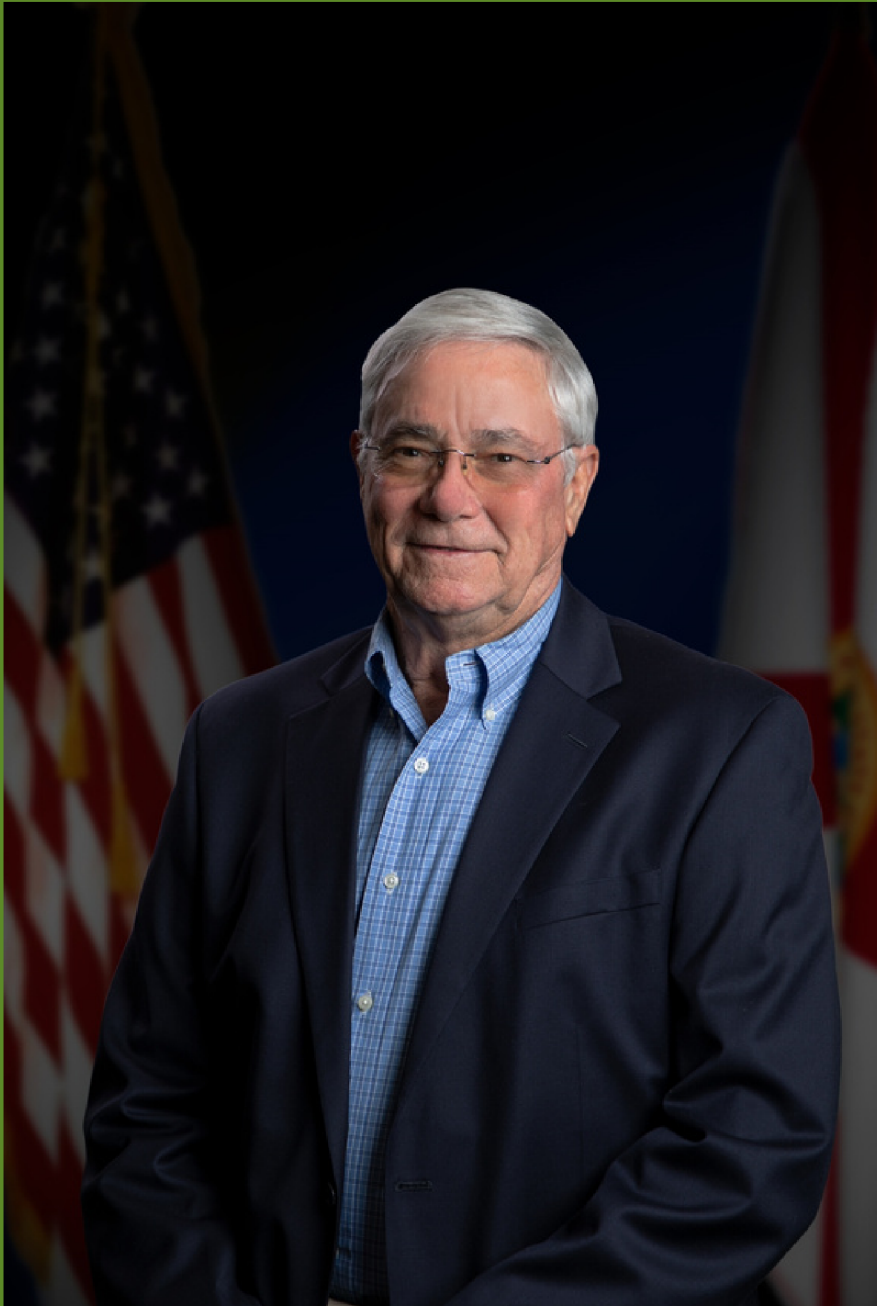
Clearly, we are not the same Wildwood as when I was first elected, and we aren't even the same city we were a few years ago.

People are flocking to central Florida in staggering numbers, and many of those moving in are choosing to live in Wildwood, partly because of our best-in-the-region taxes and our extremely low violent crime rate. Yet many of our longtime, multi-generational families continue to call Wildwood home, and fondly remember the days when the city moved at a slower pace, had a lot more open space, and leaders knew the name that went with every face.

It is our greatest responsibility—and often challenge—to balance the needs of all citizens. That sometimes requires making difficult decisions.

Growth and development bring abundant resources that help us provide services and amenities to our residents, but also demand expanded infrastructure and personnel to manage it. The most obvious example of this is our current, pressing need to increase Wildwood's wastewater treatment capacity.

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Happy New Year



NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

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In 2023, we made the decision to upgrade our existing facility to improve its performance and extend its life, while we also undertook the planning and design of a new facility to operate in tandem with our existing plant. Those two projects will increase our total capacity to about 5.5 million gallons a day. We weighed multiple options, including decommissioning our current facility and replacing it with a larger new facility. Ultimately we decided that upgrading what we had and scaling back the new facility offered the best overall value.

Even so, it is the largest infrastructure project we have ever undertaken, and it requires a daunting financial investment. We have applied for state funding to reduce the burden on ratepayers, and remain sensitive to the challenge that even modest rate increases can place on our citizens. We now are finalizing a new contract with a nationally recognized construction management firm with extensive experience in these types of facilities to help ensure the project stays on schedule and within budget.

Another big decision we made last year was to move ahead with the construction of a new downtown parking garage on the west side of Main Street. The multistory structure will support both existing and new businesses as we move forward with Wildwood's downtown master plan for redevelopment. We're going to break ground on that garage next week and expect construction of a new commercial building one block south of the garage to start this spring. Those two projects will bring a whole new look to Main Street by year's end.

While not as large as the wastewater plant construction, the parking garage still requires a significant investment by the city.

Our decision to proceed was founded on the understanding it will drive the growth and private investment along Main Street needed to create a vibrant, walkable downtown district with retail, dining, entertainment, and greenspace—the vision residents told us they most wanted to see become reality.

We faced many other decisions as well last year as a commissioner, and I can tell you, we didn't always agree.

There are countless other projects we would like to tackle in our effort to provide and do more for our residents. But each one carries a sizeable price tag, and those numbers continue to escalate in a post-pandemic world where we are still facing incredibly long lead times for supplies and equipment, creating havoc with construction schedules and budgets.

As we look forward to 2024, I fully expect we will be faced with many more difficult and weighty decisions. If I thought the job as commissioner and mayor would get easier over time, I was wrong, at least in part.

The experience and knowledge I've gained in the past 49 years as an elected official has unquestionably helped guide my decisions, but those decisions have become far greater in number, scope, and consequence.

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Downtown Parking Garage GROUNDBREAKING



January 8, 2024

11:00 a.m.

Join city officials at the corner of US 301 and Oxford St. to help kick off construction of a new multistory garage expected to open in the fall of 2024. All are welcome.



**WILDWOOD
FLORIDA**

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

(continued from Page 2)

I'm grateful for the dedication and expertise of our city manager and employees, who carry out Wildwood's operations and day-to-day affairs with skill and a cheerful attitude, even when they face difficult challenges in that work. They bring invaluable insight and recommendations to us that can only be gained from their unique perspective on the ground.

It remains up to each of us commissioners to continue listening to our constituents to understand their individual needs and concerns. We must combine that feedback with the input of our manager and attorney, and then listen to our own conscience to ultimately cast our votes for or against every project. Sometimes as commissioners we all agree it is the right project, but we don't all agree it is the right time to take it on.

After nearly half a century, I still understand it is an enormous honor and privilege to serve the residents of Wildwood. It is a job and responsibility I do not take lightly, and there are times when I wrestle with the decisions we face. I've learned it will never be possible to please everyone, because different people have different perspectives and priorities. I am certain that as our city continues to grow, this will become that much more evident.

Regardless of population or time served on the commission, one thing has not changed: my commitment to make decisions and vote based on what I sincerely believe best meets the needs of Wildwood and its residents. It's the reason I first ran for office and why I continue to serve.

May you all have a very happy and healthy year ahead.

- Mayor Ed Wolf

NEXT CHAT WITH A COMMISSIONER FEB 19

There will be no Community Chat with a Commissioner in January due to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. The next session will be held Monday, Feb. 19, 2024, at the Warfield Auditorium, located at 98 S. Warfield Ave., when Mayor Ed Wolf will be on hand from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. to visit with members of the public.

IRRIGATION RESTRICTIONS

Wildwood officials have announced enforcement of water conservation measures in cooperation with the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Declaration of a Modified Phase I Water Shortage.

The declaration prohibits "wasteful and unnecessary" water use and requires the city to report on violations and enforcement actions related to conservation measures.

Wildwood's adopted conservation measures limit days and times for irrigation based on the district's designations and authorize the city manager to discontinue potable water and reclaimed water service used for irrigation to any property that remains in violation after a warning notice or citation.

In Sumter County, including the entire City of Wildwood, lawn watering is restricted to no more than twice per week and designates specific days and times during which that watering may occur.

Properties having street addresses with even numbers (ending in 0, 2, 4, 6, or 8) may water on Thursday and/or Sunday before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

Addresses with odd numbers (ending in 1, 3, 5, 7, or 9) may water on Wednesday and/or Saturday before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m. Locations without an assigned address may water on Tuesday and/or Friday before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

Certain exceptions apply to hand watering, micro-irrigation of plants other than lawns, newly planted landscaping, and other specific situations.

Restrictions remain in effect through July 1, 2024, unless otherwise announced. For details and more information, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/swfwmd-water-restrictions>.



WILDWOOD
FLORIDA

Lawn Irrigation Restrictions:

Even-numbered addresses

may water only on

Thursdays before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

Sundays before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

Odd-numbered addresses

may water only on

Wednesdays before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

Saturdays before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.



Certain exceptions apply. Go to

<https://tinyurl.com/swfwmd-water-restrictions> for more information.

CITY HONORS EMPLOYEES FOR LOYAL SERVICE

Last month, City Manager Jason McHugh presented service awards to 16 employees in appreciation of their years of dedication and hard work serving the citizens of Wildwood.

Clockwise from top right: Alice Borrack, Finance (35 years), Audrey Tanner, Police (35 years), Jason Wheeler, Parks and Recreation (25 years), Steve Watson, Fleet (25 years), Brian Hatfield, Utilities (25 years), and Mike Weaver, Utilities (25 years).

Not pictured: Hector Hernandez, Parks and Recreation (10 years), Adam Barker, Police (5 years), Jared Fort, Utilities (5 years), Jeremy Hockenbury, Public Works (5 years), Jennifer Hutchins, Police (5 years), Casey Jones, Public Works (5 years), Joey Moose, Utilities (5 years), David Perry, Police (5 years), Tara Tradd, Development Services (5 years), and Melissa Tuck, Human Resources (5 years).



A LOOK BACK AT 2023 IN WILDWOOD...



UPCOMING MEETINGS

Code Compliance

January 2, 2024
1:00 p.m.

Local Planning Agency

January 2, 2024
2:00 p.m.

Planning and Zoning

January 2, 2024
2:15 p.m.

City Commission

January 8, 2024
7:00 p.m.

January 22, 2024
7:00 p.m.

Project Review Committee

January 9, 2024
10:00 a.m.

General Information

Unless otherwise specified, all meetings are held at City Hall, 100 N. Main St.

Agendas and minutes are posted on the city's website. Go to www.wildwood-fl.gov and click on [Agenda](#).

Meetings are open to the public. Attend in person or remotely by going to the city website and clicking on [Government > Attend a Meeting Virtually](#).

Anyone wishing to speak during Public Forum should submit a comment card before the meeting begins.



A LOOK AT WILDWOOD HISTORY

This photo shows a parade, unstopped by rain, along Main Street/US 301, believed to be in 1958. The photographer and exact date are unknown.

HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSURES

City offices will be closed on Monday, January 15, 2024, in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

ANNUAL HYDRANT FLUSHING WORK TO CONTINUE IN JANUARY

Sumter County's fire department is expected to continue its annual fire hydrant maintenance during January.

While this maintenance is taking place, lower-than-normal water pressure and/or rusty or discolored water may occur. These issues should clear up within a few hours.

If you experience water issues that do not resolve quickly, during hydrant flushing or otherwise, please call 352-330-1336 and a water technician will be dispatched to your area.

STAY UP TO DATE ON CITY HAPPENINGS

1. Check wildwood-fl.gov for general information.
2. Sign up for **notifications** at wildwood-fl.gov.
3. Follow us on **Facebook**:

- [facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida](https://www.facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida)
- [facebook.com/WildwoodParksRecEvents](https://www.facebook.com/WildwoodParksRecEvents)
- [facebook.com/WildwoodPoliceFL](https://www.facebook.com/WildwoodPoliceFL)

CITY INFORMATION

Commission

Ed Wolf
Mayor
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Pamala Harrison-Bivins
Mayor Pro Tem
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Joe Elliott
Commissioner
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Marcos Flores
Commissioner
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Julian Green
Commissioner
jgreen@wildwood-fl.gov

City Hall

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Directory

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Jason McHugh
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jmchugh@wildwood-fl.gov

Development Services
352-330-1334

Human Resources
352-330-1340

Parks and Recreation
352-461-0134

Police (Non-Emergency)
352-330-1355

Police (Emergency)
911

Public Works
352-330-1343

Utilities
352-330-1336