



The Latest from your District 5 Office

Dear Friend,

We in your District Five office wish you and yours a Happy Thanksgiving! We hope your time is filled with a feeling of gratitude for the gifts in your life.

I am thankful for having safe and secure housing for my wife and our pets. We know not all of our neighbors, family, and friends can count on this basic human need.

This brings me to a group of special people I feel grateful for - **The Capital Area Justice Ministry (CAJM)** - *a diverse coalition of nearly 20 religious congregations coming together to answer the scriptural call to "do justice" by bringing together people power to solve entrenched local community problems at their root.*

For years now, CAJM has developed well-researched proposals to increase the stock of affordable rental housing for low-income and very low-income families. They have advocated at the City of Tallahassee, at the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency, and now are working on the Leon County Commission. Will your Leon County Commission be the first to say **YES to doing something to stem the worsening affordable housing crisis?**

At our November meeting, we unanimously voted to have staff bring an analysis of the current CAJM proposal to a future meeting. We expect the vote on this proposal to come to the December 10th meeting or the January 28th meeting.

We will update you when the final date for this vote is set.

Finally, I will share my hope with you for the future. We all want to alleviate suffering from major issues in our community. But often new ideas are met with resistance, despite being effective in other areas.

We see stories of other local governments showing true leadership by bringing new ideas to the fight to fix our biggest problems:

- The Penny for Pinellas program increasing affordable rental housing,
- [Hoboken, NJ achieving zero traffic fatalities](#) in only four years.

I hope for a future when Leon County is part of this small group of local governments brave enough to try something new for their people.

Sincerely,

Shelter Pet of the Month - ♥ Chuck ♥



Meet Lovable Chuck ♥, a housetrained, kid-friendly, dog-friendly, crate-trained, and loving dog who was surrendered to the Animal Service Center due to his family facing housing issues. His family had adopted him from a long stay at the Animal Service Center and were devastated to have to return him. Despite their heartbreak, his family knew he deserved another chance at happiness.

Chuck is a "model dog" who is:

- ☐ Housetrained and signals when it's time to go out.
- ☐ Crate-trained and settles comfortably.
- ☐ Sleeps in the bed only if invited.
- ☐ Perfect with kids and loves hugs.

Chuck, an absolute joy in his family's life, is now waiting for a new family to give him a fresh start. Visit the shelter today to meet this incredible boy and make him part of your family.

By Appointment: Daily: **10:00a - 6:00p**

Walk-in Kennel Viewings: Wed., Sat. and Sun.: **1:00p - 5:00p**

Phone: 850-891-2950

Shelter Address: 1125 Easterwood Drive

Shelter Adoption Information

Affordable Housing Update

At our November Commission Meeting I received unanimous approval to have our staff collaborate with the [Capital Area Justice Ministry](#) (CAJM) and prepare an agenda item with a proposal amending our 5-year capital improvement budget to set aside 20% of the county's annual Blueprint surcharge revenues, beginning in 2026 to fund an Affordable Rental Housing Land Acquisition and Leaseback Program modeled on the [Penny for Pinellas Land Assembly Fund](#).

If approved, this proposal would set aside nearly \$1.3 million for affordable rental housing projects each year that include rental units for extremely low and very low income families.

How it Works:

The plan that CAJM is proposing allows the Leon County Housing Finance Authority (HFA) to review developer applications and obtain appraisals for the land that is proposed for the project. If approved, the HFA commits to purchase the land and then lease it back to the developer for 99 years for an annual fee to the property taxes they would pay.

In exchange, the developer would agree to set aside a specified percentage of units for renters with extremely-low and very-low incomes. The purchase-leaseback arrangement reduces the developer's upfront capital costs by the amount of the cost of the land. This reduces the debt the developer must incur to begin the project and frees up money to be devoted to other capital costs of the project.



11/19/2024

Votes

Directed staff to collaborate with CAJM to prepare an agenda item with a proposal amending the 5-year capital improvement budget to set aside 20% of the county's annual Blueprint surcharge revenues, beginning in 2026, for the duration of Blueprint 2020, to fund an Affordable Rental Housing Land Acquisition and Leaseback Program modelled on the Penny for Pinellas Land Assembly Fund.

PASS

YES

Cummings, Welch, Caban,
Proctor, Minor, O'Keefe,
Maddox

NO

Tallahassee Animal Shelter Foundation's Animal Welfare Champion Award

This year I was honored to have been chosen as the [Animal Shelter Foundation](#) 2024 Animal Welfare Champion Award! Supporting homeless animals has always been a passion, and I am grateful to use the office I have been given to do that work! This is the award I am most proud of!

About the Award

The Animal Welfare Champion Award recognizes a public official who champions and supports animal welfare initiatives in the community, while also promoting responsible pet ownership. This award recognizes the dedication

and advocacy of the official in promoting positive change for homeless animals in the care of the shelter and fostering a more compassionate animal community. It serves as a symbol of appreciation for their efforts in making a positive difference in the lives of homeless animals.



Pedestrian Safety in Leon County

At last Tuesday's County Commission Meeting I received unanimous support to have our staff bring back information at a future meeting identifying new actionable ways to prevent pedestrian-related severe injuries and fatalities in all of Leon County, incorporating lessons from successful example governments.

This year our county has seen more than 184 crashed involving a pedestrian, resulting in 12 pedestrian deaths. We should be looking at best practices from across the country to see what is working for other counties and municipalities.

One example I am encouraged by is Hoboken, New Jersey. They are committed to [Vision Zero](#): a set of guidelines adopted by numerous cities, states and nations seeking to eliminate traffic deaths. Since 2017, when reforms were enacted in Hoboken, the city of more than 66,000 people, has not reported a single automobile occupant, bicyclist or pedestrian traffic death, elevating them as a national model for roadway safety.



11/19/2024 Votes

Directed staff to prepare an agenda item identifying new actionable ways to prevent pedestrian-related severe injuries and fatalities in all of Leon County, incorporating lessons from successful example governments.

PASS

YES
Cummings, Welch, Caban,
Proctor, Minor, O'Keefe,
Maddox

NO

Renaming of the Courthouse in honor of Judge Augustus D. Aikens, Jr.

Last Friday we celebrated the retirement of Leon County's longest serving judge, Augustus D. Aikens, Jr., and officially renamed the courthouse in his honor. Judge Aikens was first appointed to the bench by then-Gov. Lawton Chiles in 1997, then elected in 2000, 2006, 2012 and 2018, serving our county for 27 years.

His work throughout his career exemplifies a commitment to justice, tireless service to others, and a compassionate approach to those who need it most. I especially appreciate Judge Aikens' establishing the Leon County Veterans Treatment Court to support veterans facing mental health or substance abuse challenges. Before becoming a judge, he earned a Bronze Star and retired from the United States Army Reserves and a Full Colonel.





Local Holiday Events

Leon County Closures & Service Changes

November 28 - [Annual Turkey Trot](#)
December 7 - [Winter Festival & Parade - A Celebration of Lights](#)
December 7-14 - [Candy Cane Lane](#)
December 15 - [Holiday Strolls in Cascades Park](#)
December 19 - [Elf Night at Dorothy B. Owen Park](#)
December 31 - [Countdown at Cascades](#)

Leon County Closures/Services Changes for the Thanksgiving Holiday

Closed Thursday, Nov. 28 and Friday, Nov. 29 - Leon County offices, libraries, community centers, Animal Control.

Remaining Open - Leon County Parks and Recreation facilities (parks, greenways, campgrounds, and boat landings).

Residential Waste Collection - delayed one day for citizens whose normal pick-up day is during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Democratic Environmental Caucus of Leon County

On Tuesday, December 3 the [Democratic Environmental Caucus of Leon County](#) will host a Panel Discussion and Potluck Dinner entitled, ***Resistance, Hope and Purpose***, to provide the community with ideas about how to continue to engage locally to protect the environment, address inequities and act on the values to keep Leon County and Tallahassee as strong as possible.

The event is scheduled for 7:00pm in Tallahassee City Hall (300. S. Adams St.).



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