

Crime, heart attacks, and trash discussed at KH meeting

BY JENN SAMSEL
Special to the Monitor

Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook spoke at a Sheriff’s Net meeting in Keystone Heights in which she reviewed the county’s crime statistics.

The event, hosted by chair Debbie Beals, also featured a health expert who trained audience members on how to respond to heart attacks.

The final speaker was County Commissioner Betsy Condon who summarized the latest commission meeting.

During the July 26 gathering at the First Baptist Church of Keystone Heights, Cook provided an update on felony drug arrests, response times, violent crime, and historical property crime rates in Clay County.

Cook said that despite the county’s exponential growth, crime rates have steadily declined over the past three years. The low crime rate is due



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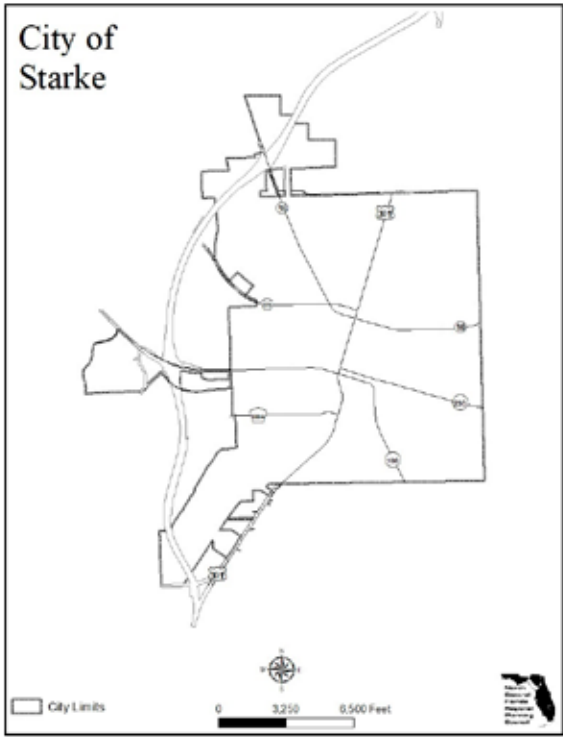


Guest speaker Jennifer Silvey, Emergency Preparedness Manager at UF Health Jacksonville, spoke about how critical CPR is with the motto of “Staying Alive” - continual compressions- and why people of all ages should learn CPR.

NOTICE OF ZONING CHANGE

The City Commission of the City of Starke, Florida proposes to change the use of land within the area shown on the map below, by amending the text of the City of Starke Land Development Code, hereinafter referred to as the Land Development Code, as follows:

LDC 24-02, is an application by the City Commission to amend the text of the Land Development Code by amending Section 1-12 entitled Definitions to add definitions for Above-ground Fueling Station and Electric Distribution Substation; by amending Section 4 to add electric distribution substation as a permitted use in certain zoning districts in accordance with Section 163.3208, Florida Statutes, as amended; by amending Section 4 to add above-ground fueling stations as an accessory use to electric distribution substations in certain zoning districts; by amending Division 4 entitled Miscellaneous Provisions to add Section 4-219 entitled Electric Distribution Substations to include supplementary requirements consistent with Policy A.1.28 of the Comprehensive Plan; and by amending Division 4 entitled Miscellaneous Provisions to add Section 4-220 entitled Above-ground Fueling, Gas, or Chemical Storage Tanks to include supplementary requirements for above-ground storage tanks.



The first of two public hearings will be conducted by the City Commission to consider the amendment and conduct a first reading of the ordinance adopting the amendment on September 3, 2024 at 5:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, in the City Commission Meeting Room, City Hall located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida. The title of said ordinance reads, as follows:

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-16

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE CITY OF STARKE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE, AS AMENDED, PURSUANT TO AN APPLICATION, LDC 24-02, BY THE CITY COMMISSION, RELATING TO AN AMENDMENT TO THE TEXT OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE; PROVIDING FOR AMENDING SECTION 1-12 ENTITLED DEFINITIONS BY ADDING DEFINITIONS FOR ABOVE-GROUND FUELING STATION AND ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION SUBSTATION; PROVIDING FOR AMENDING SECTION 4 BY ADDING ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION SUBSTATION AS A PERMITTED USE IN CERTAIN ZONING DISTRICTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 163.3208, FLORIDA STATUTES, AS AMENDED; PROVIDING FOR AMENDING SECTION 4 BY ADDING ABOVE-GROUND FUELING STATIONS AS AN ACCESSORY USE TO ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION SUBSTATIONS IN CERTAIN ZONING DISTRICTS; PROVIDING FOR AMENDING DIVISION 4 ENTITLED MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS BY ADDING SECTION 4-219 ENTITLED ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION SUBSTATIONS BY ADDING SUPPLEMENTARY REQUIREMENTS CONSISTENT WITH POLICY A.1.28 OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR AMENDING DIVISION 4 ENTITLED MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS BY ADDING SECTION 4-220 ENTITLED ABOVE-GROUND FUELING, GAS, OR CHEMICAL STORAGE TANKS BY ADDING SUPPLEMENTARY REQUIREMENTS FOR ABOVE-GROUND STORAGE TANKS; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

At the aforementioned public hearing, all interested parties may appear to be heard with respect to the amendment and the ordinance adopting the amendment.

Copies of the amendment and ordinance are available for public inspection at the City Building and Zoning Department, located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours.

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decisions made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that for such purpose they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact the Office of the City Clerk at 904.964.5027 or via the Florida Relay Service 800.955.8770 (voice) or 800.955.8771 (TTY) at least 48 hours prior to the date of the public hearing.

in part to the prosecution rate for felony drug arrests, which has been consistently over 85% for the past three years, contributing to a safer environment for all.

The sheriff explained that the vast majority of violent crimes are simple assault charges, adding, “You are as safe today for violent crimes as you were a decade ago.”

Response times have returned to what they were 10 years ago, especially given the substantial population increases the county has experienced. A decade ago, the average response time was nine minutes, thirty-four seconds. Today it is 9:59.

She added that Clay County Commissioners are working to increase the adequate staffing her agency needs, which will further accelerate response times.

Cook said the property crime rate is one-half what it was 10 years ago. She stated that most property crimes today are shoplifting, motor vehicle theft, and fraud.

The sheriff explained that many of these cases are solved quickly with the help of technology, such as apprehending criminals using the cameras of nearby businesses.

She also said that keeping drugs out of Clay communities is a determining factor in reducing theft and violence in the neighborhoods. Cook explained that if you can catch the small crimes, the large criminals will

stay away.

The sheriff thanked the men and women in local law enforcement and her staff’s hard work and dedication.

Cook briefly mentioned the new trial phase of the agency’s body camera implementation, which involves testing the devices in the field. She said her goal is to ensure each deputy wears a body camera in the next few years.

Lastly, the county’s chief law enforcement officer emphasized the importance of community vigilance in maintaining safety. She implored audience members to report suspicious activity immediately.

Cook added that although her agency does not respond to social media posts, community involvement is critical to keeping the crime rate low and vital to the community’s safety.

CPR and AEDs

With heart attacks on the rise, having the fundamental technique of CPR could save someone before EMS arrives at the scene.

Guest speaker Jennifer Silvey, Emergency Preparedness Manager at UF Health Jacksonville, spoke about how critical CPR is with the motto of “Staying Alive” - continual compressions- and why people of all ages should learn CPR. She

then demonstrated CPR basics and how the AED defibrillator worked. She briefly spoke about child and infant CPR, too. Silvey stressed that bystanders should always call 911 for all medical emergencies.

Condon added that anyone needing assistance with the new bins should contact the county.

Curbside recycling will no longer occur, but residents may take recyclables to the environmental convenience center in Keystone Heights.

The commissioner also stated that yard and large items will continue to be collected. Large families who place garbage bags outside the bins must purchase stickers, which must be placed on additional bags for pick-up service. Each sticker costs \$4.

The commissioner said Clay County will build five new fire stations in the next five years and six or seven new ones in the next ten years. The sheriff’s office is occupying its 29th building while commissioners work on establishing a new long-term operational facility. These changes are needed to continue meeting the market’s exponential demands.

Sheriff’s Net meetings are held each quarter at the end of the month. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 24, at 6:00 p.m., at First Baptist Church. Contact Debbie Beals at deborah.beals@gmail.com for more information.

Clay County Commissioner Betsy Condon concluded the Sheriff’s Net presentations by summarizing the county commission meeting from the previous evening.

Condon said new trash services will roll out on October 1. Everyone will receive a new 96-gallon trash bin with a radio frequency identification tag. The new trash contractor operates technologically advanced garbage trucks equipped with RFID readers.

Regular garbage trucks will follow normal routes, and special 250 Chassey trucks will pick up trash on private and dirt roads.

The new vehicles will be equipped with cameras. Condon said that with a video record of the route, the county could determine if a missed pickup was the contractor’s fault or whether the resident missed the deadline for pickup.

Worthington Springs parking lot under construction

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
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The Worthington Springs Community Center’s parking lot expansion is temporarily on hold pending the processing of a change order.

The project, which should add around 18 new spaces to the center, is funded by a state grant.

Town Clerk Pat Harrell said several years ago, the town was awarded a \$600,000 grant to pave streets in the Worthington Springs Trailer Park.

However, when questions arose about the ownership of the streets and easement proceedings were delayed, town leaders decided to redirect the funding to a less controversial project.

Harrell added that since the parking lot expansion will only cost between \$170,000 and



The Town of Worthington Springs is expanding its community center’s parking lot, which will add around 18 spaces.

\$200,000, the balance of the grant will revert to the state.

The town clerk said one part of the change order involves removing an additional tree. Another amendment involves

moving an underground gas tank that supplies fuel to the community center’s generator.

Harrell said the community center is frequently used for receptions, weddings, family

reunions, and other events. She added that the facility is rented virtually all Saturdays and is often rented on both days of the weekend.

Lake Brooklyn gains 3.6 inches in July

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
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A St. John’s River Water Management District official said the water level in Lake Brooklyn rose by three-tenths of a foot in July.

The district’s water resource information bureau chief, Tim Miller, said Nassau, Duval, Bradford, and Clay counties received more than two inches of rain above their monthly

averages.

He added that the district’s southern counties lagged behind those in the north, with Nassau County recording 9.71 inches of precipitation in July and Brevard County receiving only 3.84 inches.

The district’s 12-month rolling average remained three-fourths of an inch below the annual average of 51.01 inches.

However, Nassau, Volusia, Clay, and Bradford counties are

more than two inches above their 12-month averages, and Alachua County is more than five inches below its 12-month average.

Miller reported that river flow levels remained in the average range throughout the district, with flows in the St. Johns River’s upper basin lower than those in the lower basin, reflecting more rainfall in the northern portions of the district.

The bureau chief said aquifer levels increased in July, bringing

most aquifer readings to the normal range except for Duval, St. Johns, and Flagler counties.

“Very low conditions persist along portions of the northern coast,” he said of aquifer levels, “continuing to highlight urban zones which had experienced increased irrigation pressures due to consecutive months of below normal rainfall prior to July.”