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We are the City of Natural Charm and have been taking active steps to help ensure that our natural beauty and charm remain so for the city’s next 100 years and beyond. This month’s newsletter looks at ways to manage growth and improve community safety. I have also introduced a new section that highlights one of the city’s various small businesses. Please enjoy this newsletter as we explore how the city is changing and serving it residents.

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### **New Water Meters**

Smart meters are coming to Groveland. Currently, all the water meters in the city are being replaced with smart meters. These meters, when installed, can be accessed by customers as well as the city staff. I understand the new meters will allow for the setting of alerts such as: an alert of high-water usage or of continuous water usage that may indicate a leak. These alerts can be set to provide notice to both the customers and to city staff.

### **New Customer Care Phone Number**

A number of different issues occurred over the last few months that impacted many of the city’s residents. One of the lessons learned from those events was when someone tried to call the city about an issue, sometimes all they received was a voice mail. After assuming they got the right office and leaving a message, they then waited for a return call. To help ensure that our residents get a more personal service experience, the city has created a Customer Care telephone line. The number for this line is **1-888-429-1922**. If you call this number during normal business hours, you should get a live person to whom you can explain your problem or concern. That individual will then be able to direct your call to the proper department or individual responsible. If that department is unavailable, the contact person will record your issue and enter it into the city system for action. I thank for your patience as we continue to grow the city.

### **Fire Department Dive Team**

The Groveland Fire Department (GFD) is the only local fire department to have a search and rescue dive team and as such it serves as a regional asset. The only other dive team in Lake County is the Lake County Sheriff’s Office Dive Team. GFD’s Dive Team was founded in 2007 as a special unit of the Groveland Fire Department. The team responds to all water rescue calls within the city as well as aiding other cities under mutual aid agreements. The dive team boat and all associated equipment are housed at Fire Station 1 located at the City’s Public Safety Complex.

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Over the years, the GFD dive team has seen growth in its capabilities. Until recently, most of the underwater missions were conducted by feel and touch due to the dark waters and poor visibility in the region's lakes and retention ponds. In 2019, the team obtained a **side scan sonar** to aid in searching for various targets under water. The team has since upgraded and expanded dive gear for all the team members. Last year, the team acquired Rapid Diver sets which can be donned very quickly while responding to a water-based emergency such as a submerged vehicle. These Rapid Diver set-ups are kept on each of the fire department's three paramedic staffed fire engines as well as the Battalion Chief's vehicle. Currently, members of the dive team and other fire fighters are being trained in their use. This new resource will allow our emergency responders to affect a timelier rescue of persons involved in a water-based incident.

Additionally, the GFD recently took delivery of a micro ROV (remotely operated vessel) that can be quickly deployed to conduct underwater searches. With this capability, the dive team can begin to gather information and develop an understanding of the underwater situation they will be facing, while they are preparing to enter the water. It further provides them the opportunity in some cases to gather the data and information they need or conduct a search without having to place a diver in the water in an environment that could be hazardous to a diver.

### Managing Growth

There has been a lot of activity throughout the city regarding different roads and projects. Below are the highlights on those projects.

When I first ran for office, I talked about the need for the city to adopt a Smart Growth program in order for the city to grow in the manner which would preserve the wonderful quality of life that Groveland provides. A quick refresher on what Smart Growth is. Smart Growth America identifies ten principles of Smart Growth. These principles are: (1) mix land uses; (2) take advantage of existing community assets; (3) create a range of housing opportunities; (4) foster 'walkable' close-knit neighborhoods; (5) promote distinctive, attractive communities; (6) preserve farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas; (7) strengthen and encourage growth in existing communities; (8) provide a variety of transportation choices; (9) make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective; and (10) encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions.

**Future Land Use** – The first step the city took to achieve smart growth was the adoption of a new future land use plan that clearly identifies where development will occur in the city and what areas will remain undeveloped. You can see a map of the city's zoning and future land use designations online at: <https://groveland.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>. By adopting new land uses, the city clearly sets the stage for future development.

**Community Development Code** - To further realize some of the principles of smart growth identified above, the city also adopted a new Community Development Code, which you can view online at: [https://library.municode.com/fl/groveland/codes/community\\_development\\_code?nodeId=INTRODUCTION\\_INTRODUCTION](https://library.municode.com/fl/groveland/codes/community_development_code?nodeId=INTRODUCTION_INTRODUCTION).

The stated purpose of the new community development code is:

It is the intent of this code to promote public health, safety, and general welfare of the community. It includes but is not limited to the specific municipal purposes below.

1. To achieve mixed use development that is appropriate in scale and intensity for each Community Type.

2. To establish a relationship between buildings, streets, and Open Spaces that is pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
3. To preserve and enhance the City's natural charm while promoting innovative development that sustainably manages the environment, including stormwater runoff and mitigation of the urban heat island effect.
4. To ensure that a variety of housing types and sizes can be developed to meet the needs of the entire community.
5. To promote a variety of safe transportation options with context-based thoroughfare design.
6. To promote a public realm of high aesthetic value.

One can see from the above that the city has adopted the tools which will allow it to help **define and manage the nature of growth** that Groveland is experiencing. However, one of the more difficult issues is how does the city manage its growth. I see this as the main issue facing Groveland and retaining our natural charm. So, what do I mean by managing growth? Most people are likely not aware that prior to 2018, the city council approved various zoning changes, including the issuance of planned unit development (PUD) ordinances. All of those changes created **entitlements** to the property owners as regards to the use of that land and to the number of houses they are allowed to build. An examination of current entitlements reveals that the city has approved approximately 25,000 additional homes that can be built in the city.

Why are these entitlements important? In 1995, the Florida Legislature passed the **Bert J. Harris, Jr., Private Property Rights Protection Act**. It has been amended at various times over the years with the latest amendment being in 2021. Basically, this act gives a land owner the ability to sue the city whenever the city takes an action that the owner believes reduces the value of their property. So, if a land owner is entitled to build a certain number of houses on a piece of property and the city takes away that right, the city will likely be sued.

So, what can we do to better manage our growth? First, the creation of the new **Community Development Code** helps the city as it defines how residential communities are developed. The new code creates dense housing at the center of the development, transitioning to larger lots on the edges. It also seeks to help reduce traffic by creating a walkable environment that includes local shopping. These actions help to reduce the number of cars or vehicle trips on the roads. Further, it requires larger green spaces within communities, including parks and trails, providing for an enhanced quality of life for the community members.

A second action the city is engaged in is working with Lake County to develop a **joint planning agreement**. The Lake County Board of County Commissioners hosted a joint planning work group meeting with all municipalities in Lake County on Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The purpose of the joint planning work group meeting was to provide an environment for the Lake County Board of County Commissioners and all 14 municipalities within Lake County to work together on a vision for future development in Lake County. The workgroup's focus is to develop a strategy for promoting growth in targeted urban areas while focusing on maintaining the unique qualities of rural Lake County. This collaborative effort provides the city and county the opportunity to create a cohesive plan for future development in all unincorporated and incorporated areas of the county. The first meeting identified a number of areas on which to partner, including: communications, growth management, economic development, schools, infrastructure and future land use. As a result of the first meeting, there was agreement on the value of working together and the group has agreed to meet every three months to pursue a more unified approach to growth.

A final way the city is seeking to manage growth is to look at the creation of a system that would allow land owners the ability to swap entitlements. For example, a property is currently entitled to build a subdivision, but that subdivision would better preserve the natural beauty and environment if built at another location in the city. If there was a way for a land owner to swap their entitlement for housing by selling that entitlement saving their land for conservation or agriculture, it may be possible for the city to help manage where growth is occurring and what the growth is in that area.

### Historical Fact

The following was taken from the Groveland Historical Society website, which you can access online at: <https://www.grovelandhistory.org>

**1940s-1980s - Citrus was King** - By the 1940s, citrus became the leading industry in the area. From the 1940s through the 1980s, citrus was king! South Lake County was a canvas of green and orange. The air smelled like perfume and tourists flocked to see the new Citrus Tower in Clermont, built in 1956.

The B & W Canning Company was formed by Gene Busbee and Norton Wilkins. The B & W Canning Plant was built, behind the Train Depot, on the northeast corner of SR 50 and SR 19.

The citrus industry lasted until around 1989, when many of the groves began to succumb to the freezing temperatures. Triple freezes in the 1980s changed the landscape and economy forever with many of the land owners beginning to sell out to subdivision developers, while others converted to raising cattle.

### Food Trucks

The City of Groveland is currently reviewing its policies regarding mobile food trucks. While it reviews its policies, it has established a temporary pilot program which will allow food trucks to operate within the city. The city has identified Festival Park, at the corner of Main and Crittenden streets as the location for the pilot program. Food trucks may obtain a permit to operate in the park between the hours of dawn to dusk. So, if you are looking for a place to try some new food, stop by Festival Park and see what trucks are there.

### Upcoming Events

#### ***Centennial Celebration***

The city's centennial celebration continues in March with a full set of events the weekend of March 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> at Lake David Park. The activities focus on remembering Groveland's second 50 years, from 1973 to 2022.

**Saturday, Mar. 26th** from 11 am – 8 pm. Events include:

- Barefoot Waterski Competition from 11 – 6 on Lake David
- Truck and Tractor Show from 12 – 4 Truck and Tractor Show;
- Musical entertainment: Twinkle 11:30 – 12:45, Slippery When Wet 1:15 – 2:30, James Otto 3:00 – 4:14, Randall Crawford 4:45 – 6:00, and Selwyn Birchwood 6:30 – 7:45.
- Spectacular Fireworks Show at 7:45 pm.

## Upcoming Events (Cont.)

### ***Centennial Celebration***

**Sunday, Mar. 27<sup>th</sup>** from 11 am – 6 pm

Musical entertainment: NFusion 11:30 – 12:45, Fleetwood Max 1:15 – 2:30,  
Randy McNeely 3:00 – 4:15, and Craig Campbell 6:30 – 7:45.

There will also be vendors, food trucks, a kids zone, an exhibition by the Groveland Historical Society and more to celebrate Groveland's second fifty years.

For more information visit: [www.groveland-fl.gov/35/events](http://www.groveland-fl.gov/35/events).

### ***Farmers Market***

The city hosts a Farmer's Market on the second Friday of each month at Lake David Park in downtown Groveland. The market hours are from 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm. In addition to fresh produce from local farms, there are home-made crafts, live music and food trucks. Come down and enjoy a great evening at a beautiful park.

## Got a Question?

While this newsletter comes out multiple times during the year and I try to pass on information that I believe most residents would find of interest, I also realize I may not be answering all your questions. If you have a question about something going on in the city, please feel free to email it to me at [mike.smith@groveland-fl.gov](mailto:mike.smith@groveland-fl.gov). I will not only answer it for you in an email, but I will also consider adding your issue to a future edition of the newsletter.

## Subscribe

If you would like to receive future copies of this newsletter, please subscribe for notifications by going to the Notify Me page on the city website at <http://groveland-fl.gov/list.aspx>. When you get to the website, enter your email address in the box and click "Sign In". Next click the envelope icon next to Councilman Smith's Newsletter. You will get a verification email and then a confirmation email after you have subscribed. Once subscribed you will get notification any new newsletters or news bulletins I post. The current and past newsletters are also available online at <http://groveland-fl.gov/468/Councilman-Smiths-Newsletter>.

**Thank you for your interest in the city!**

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This newsletter was created by G. L. Coleman