

City Out Growing Parks And Open Space

By Clay Waldron

According to the City of Belleview's Code of Ordinances the city is required to have 10 acres of parks per 1,000 people. The city is also required to have 10 acres of open space per 1,000. City staff reported that the current population for the City of Belleview is 5,101 (worldpopulationreview.com states the City of Belleview population is 5,281 that's 129 more than staff says). The city should have at least 51.52 acres of parks. Currently Belleview has a total of 54.54 acres of parks including 4.76 acres at City Hall Park, Kenneth Smith walking trail 8.6 acres (trail is less than one mile), Mary Ann Cafaro Park and Community Garden 3.48 acres, Lake Lillian Park 18 acres, Cherokee Park 2.7 acres, and the Sports Complex 17 acres owned by city. However no groups or organizations have been able to use City Hall Park or city hall parking lot for events in recent years. The commission does not want people to use this park and have told multiple groups they can not use it and to use Lake Lillian instead.

So if you deducted the City Hall Park off the park list since no one can use it the city would only have 49.78 acres. This would put the city behind on the city code and require the city to buy more park lands or let groups use the City Hall Park like it has been used for years. Regardless of how you count City Hall Park, once the city has 302 more people moving in, the city will have to buy more land to stay in compliance with city code.

For open space the City of Belleview's definition is defined in the comprehensive plan, as undeveloped lands suitable for passive recreation or conservation use. City staff reported that the city has a total of 55.1 acres of open space including 11.64 for the cemeteries. Also included in open space is 12.39 acres of water retention areas and easements. City well sites (which are fenced off), and 19.03 acres south of the sewer plant that includes a pond that is fenced off and the public can not use. There is also a vacant lot next to commissioner Ron Livsey and Planning and Zoning chair Pat Livsey's home which was going to be a retention pond but the commissioner did not want it next to his home. Then there were 9 parcel numbers totaling 8.99 acres that were not listed on the Marion County Property Appraiser's website.

About half of the land for open space is off limits to the public so it's not used for passive recreation or is it conservation use? To stay compliant with code the city will be required to purchase more land once the city moves in 358 more people, that's if the city can count all their properties as open space.

According to worldpopulationreview.com the City of Belleview is currently growing at a rate of 1.73 annually. That is about 441 more people in the next six months and will put the city over code requirements for both parks and open space.

The city commission has focused on improving Lake Lillian over the past four years. Now maybe a good time to start planning for the future growth because it is coming sooner then latter.



Belleview High School Class of 21' You Are Dismissed

The Belleview High School Class of 2021 ceremonies were held at the exceptional World Equestrian Center on Saturday, June 5th. 332 high school graduates walked across the stage with their classmates to receive their diploma and to take that next step towards their future. Pictured are the graduates tossing their caps high in the air as they move forward with the next chapter of their lives. (Photo by Shannon Love) **See More On Pages 11 & 12)**



Valedictorians

Lake Weir High School had two Valedictorians Sydney Gledden and Amber Whitmer. (Photo by Clay Waldron) **See More On Pages 13 & 14**



Steve Tweedle Recognized For 30 Years

Steve Tweedle was recognized for 30 years in funeral service by fellow employees of the Ocala location of Hiers-Baxley Funeral Services this week. Tweedle began his career in funeral services in Belleview at what was at that time known as Belleview Funeral Home. After that location became part of Hiers-Baxley Funeral Services, he was moved to the Ocala location where he is now general manger.

Tweedle still meets with families in all Hiers-Baxley locations in Marion County.