

# INSIDER

## CITIZEN NEWSLETTER

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Winter 2008

### A Message from Our Mayor

Mayor Nat Birdsong characterizes 2007 as a financial challenge for the City of Winter Haven. You might ask, "Why is that?" When you have to cut spending while the City's population is still growing, that population still expects the same level of services. Going forth, if taxes are cut even further, it's going to be very difficult for Winter Haven to continue the level of services without raising fees. Something will have to give."



As development continues, the City must continue providing services, Birdsong said. "The biggest challenge is facing the possibility of another round of revenue cuts as it relates to ad valorem taxes."

One project, Birdsong says will have a positive economic impact on Winter Haven, Polk County and Florida to help offset expected revenue reductions. There will be challenges to address with the planned CSX Intermodal Facility in southeast Winter Haven. Those include routing train traffic through downtown Lakeland, Birdsong said. "I believe those issues will be addressed to the satisfaction of all affected. The CSX project will have a positive long-term impact on tax generated revenues."

A 61-year-old Winter Haven native, Birdsong said recent commercial growth in the City is welcomed. "I've been very happy with the business development in the downtown and Cypress Gardens Boulevard areas. All of that helps lessen the impact of the reduction in tax revenue."

Improvements have also come to Florence Villa, where Birdsong grew up. "I'm pleased with streetscaping completed and planned for the Florence Villa area, and infrastructure improvements, as well."

These improvements should help spur business development, Birdsong said. "The one thing I'll always want to see is more business development in Florence Villa. We've had some, like The Home Depot that is within the Florence Villa Community Redevelopment district. There's also the Dollar General and auto parts store, but there's still some room for more business development in and around First Street and Avenue T."

Parks planned for the area will also help, Birdsong said. Upcoming projects in the City's northeast sector include Lake Maude, Charles Richardson and Lake Conine parks.

Affordable housing is also needed throughout the City, Birdsong said. "It's a challenge, not only for Florence Villa, but for all of Florida."

If there is one message Birdsong would like to send City residents, it's that Winter Haven must move forward. "The City of Winter Haven has continued to grow and develop in spite of the economic times and the housing downturn," he said. "We must continue pursuing our goals of becoming a premier and "distinctively different" City. All in all, 2007 was a good year, and 2008 will be just as good for Winter Haven. Winter Haven residents should be happy to know we're not planning service cuts unless forced to do so by further property tax reform."

### A New Commissioner



Elected in September, the City's newest City Commissioner, James "J.P." Powell, has been involved in previous service to the City through the Code Enforcement Board, Winter Haven Housing Committee and the Planning Commission.

"I've been in City service more than 15 years. I thought it was time to help keep the City moving toward being a premier City," said Powell, who is administrative operations manager at Oak Ridge

Funeral Care.

As a City Commissioner, Powell said he supports managed growth. Code Enforcement is also an area in which the City must be tough, Powell said. "Areas of the City that continue to have overgrown lots, present a problem."

While acknowledging he has only one vote on the City Commission, Powell said he supports redevelopment of the Chain of Lakes property and the City's airport. "All our initiatives depend on how we listen and convince others we have good ideas. Whatever is best for the citizens is what we have to work toward," he said.

Powell also looks forward to the development of the CSX Intermodal facility. "The project is going to bring economic growth not only to Winter Haven, but Polk County, as well. There will be some bumps along the way that will be worked out for the betterment of everyone."

Powell said he looks forward to at least four years continuing to serve the residents of Winter Haven as a City Commissioner.

## Airport Construction Soars



Construction on a new terminal at the Winter Haven Airport is expected to be completed later this year. The \$5.2 million facility will replace the existing World War II-era terminal and will meet growth needs for years to come.

## WHAT Terminal Opening



Winter Haven Area Transit dedicated its new bus terminal Dec. 6. The terminal, a first for WHAT, features art by Florida artists and local school children. Local and state officials, including Winter Haven Mayor Nat Birdsong, left, and Polk County Commissioner Sam Johnson, right, were among about 300 people who attended the dedication program. Below, "The Art of Transit" theme was displayed before everyone joined in the ribbon cutting.

### SPRNG TRAINING CLEVELAND INDIANS 2008 HOME SCHEDULE\*



#### DATE

Thursday, Feb. 28  
Sunday, March 2  
Wednesday, March 5  
Friday, March 7  
Saturday, March 8  
Sunday, March 9  
Tuesday, March 11  
Thursday, March 13  
Friday, March 14  
Saturday, March 15  
Thursday, March 20  
Saturday, March 22  
Monday, March 24  
Tuesday, March 25  
Thursday, March 27

#### OPPONENT

Houston Astros  
Detroit Tigers  
Atlanta Braves  
New York Mets  
Philadelphia Phillies  
Washington Nationals  
Detroit Tigers  
Toronto Blue Jays  
Washington Nationals (7:05 p.m.)  
Houston Astros  
Tampa Bay Rays  
New York Mets  
Atlanta Braves  
New York Yankees  
Tampa Bay Rays

\*All games begin at 1:05 p.m. at the Chain Of Lakes Stadium unless noted and are subject to change without notice. Call 863.293.3900 for ticket information or visit [www.indians.com](http://www.indians.com).

## Library Activities

Don't miss the many events and activities at the Winter Haven Public Library located at the corner of Avenue B and Forth Street Northwest in downtown Winter Haven.

**Art in the Garden**, Art Expo, 2-5 p.m., Sunday, March 2.

**Preschool Story Hour**, each Wednesday, 10 a.m., in the Children's Dept.

**Saturday Afternoon at the Movies**, 2 p.m., second and fourth Saturday, in the Multi Purpose Room.

**Poetry Live!**, third Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., Multi Purpose Room, recite original poetry or that written by your favorite poet.

**Winter Haven Heritage Writers Group**, first Wednesday, 10 a.m., Multi Purpose Room, explore Winter Haven history through personal memoirs and shared stories while creating a community scrapbook.

## January, February and March Special Events

<b>Pickin' in the Park</b>	Central Park	First Friday of every month; 6:30 - 8 p.m.
<b>Cruisin' Winter Haven</b>	Downtown Winter Haven	First Saturday of every month; 4 - 9 p.m.
<b>Jammin' in the Park</b>	Central Park	Third Friday of every month; 6:30 - 8 p.m.
<b>Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade</b>	First Street and Avenue T	Saturday, Jan. 19; 10 a.m.
<b>Citrus Festival</b>	Festival Fairgrounds	Jan. 17 - 27
<b>Citrus Parade</b>	Third Street to Cypress Gardens Blvd.	Jan. 26; 10 a.m.
<b>Rock Walk &amp; Run</b>	Downtown Winter Haven	Feb. 23; 2 p.m. Registration
<b>Super Bowl Bash</b>	Recreational & Cultural Center	Feb. 3; 4 p.m.
<b>Citrus Classic</b>	Downtown Winter Haven	March 1; 7:30 a.m.
<b>Central Park Art Festival</b>	Central Park	March 15 - 16; 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
<b>Easter Egg Hunt</b>	Martin Luther King, Jr., Park	March 22; 10 a.m.
<b>Cardboard Boat Races</b>	Martin Luther King, Jr., Park	March 22; 11 a.m.
<b>Easter Sunrise Service</b>	Martin Luther King, Jr., Park	March 23; 11 a.m.



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The Winter Haven Insider is a City of Winter Haven publication intended to inform area residents and businesses. If you have any questions or comments, please call 863-291-5600 or write Joy Townsend, editor, at 451 3rd St. NW, Winter Haven, FL 33883. She can also be contacted at [jtowndsend@mywinterhaven.com](mailto:jtowndsend@mywinterhaven.com).