

# STAFF REPORT REGULAR MEETING

**AGENDA DATE:** May 19, 2026

**DEPARTMENT:** Leisure Services

**TITLE:**

Jewell Post Office Frame House Project

**SUMMARY:**

The Leisure Services Department requests direction regarding management and support of the Jewell Post Office Frame House Project

**BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION:**

The proposed Jewell Post Office Frame House project, presented to Commission by Mr. Ted Brownstein, is intended to memorialize the original site of the Jewell Post Office and the James Homestead, located within what is today, South Bryant Park. Fannie and Samuel James were the first recorded settlers within the current Lake Worth Beach city limits, arriving in 1885 and establishing the community known as “Jewell.” In 1889, Fannie James opened the first Post Office for the area, formally placing Jewell on the map as an early pioneer settlement.

The specific location of the original Jewell Post Office and James Homestead aligns with the present-day South Bryant Park Picnic Pavilion and Playground between 4th and 5th Avenues South, where a State Historical Marker and an educational mural already acknowledge the site’s significance. The park has been used for school programs and other educational activities, underscoring the value of enhancing interpretation at this location.

The Jewell Post Office Frame House concept—a 14-foot by 30-foot aluminum frame structure—is modeled after the well-known Ben Franklin “Ghost House” installation in Philadelphia. This open-frame architectural outline allows visitors to visualize the footprint of a historical structure without reconstructing the building itself, making it a cost-effective, durable, and visually compelling interpretive feature. Incorporating such a structure at the Jewell site would strengthen public understanding of the City’s earliest settlement and broaden opportunities for educational programming and heritage tourism.

The project was proposed to be in collaboration with several community supporters, including the Historical Society, the MLK Committee, Healthier Lake Worth Beach, Lake Worth Rotary, NEST and the Historical Society of Palm Beach County. These collaborative relationships reflect strong community interest in elevating the history of the James family and the original settlement of Jewell. The community supporters have secured funding support from philanthropic organizations, civic groups, and private donors further strengthening the feasibility of the project.

While the Commission has expressed support for this project, the Commission has not discussed the costs and responsibilities to bring it to fruition. Funding will be needed for design, development, construction, operations, and maintenance of the project. The Commission may determine this project requires full funding of all stages solely by the community supporters, collectively by the community supporters and the city, or solely by the city. If city funds are to be utilized, the Commission may give direction regarding limits to such expenditure.

Since the project proposes construction on City property and it is staff’s understanding that the project area will not be under lease or license to another entity, staff recommends the project be managed by the city. This will require coordination and dedication across multiple departments. Responsibilities by staff will include coordinating with the community partners and master plan review; procurement of engineering and architectural professional services in compliance with CCNA requirements and of a construction contractor; development approvals including the project design, site plan amendments, and permitting; engineering, design, and construction oversight; preparation and review of funding and other legal agreements; cost estimating and budgeting; and long-term operational and ongoing maintenance responsibilities.

Given the historic significance of the site, the educational value of the proposed installation, and the level of community support, staff are seeking Commission direction on whether to proceed as a city-led project and begin coordination with architects and engineers to develop design documents as part of the next steps in the project development process. Staff are also seeking Commission direction on whether the city will take on the long-term operational and ongoing maintenance responsibilities or for staff to seek commitments in this regard from the community supporters.

**MOTION:**

Move to approve/disapprove the Jewell Post Office Frame House moving forward and provide direction to staff regarding funding for design, development, construction, operations, and maintenance of the project.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Ghost House Architectural Drawing