

New Smyrna Beach City Commission Meeting - Sept. 28, 2021

[Watch the Sept. 28 City Commission Meeting:](#)

(Click on the topic you want to view and the video will advance to that section.)

[Index of past NSB City Commission Meetings:](#)

City Commissioners unanimously approved a Fiscal Year 2021-2022 city budget totaling \$86,853,989. It will fund capital improvements such as a new fire truck and seven new police SUVs, plus the addition of 4.5 new officers and staff in the Police Department and three new firefighters.

The new budget's general fund account is \$32,847,343. The general fund is supported by the city's millage (property tax) rate that also was adopted Sept. 28 for the new fiscal year. The new millage rate is \$3.7421 per \$1,000 of taxable value.

Commissioner Michael Kolody commented to his colleagues, "As you may remember I voted against the last couple budgets. I'm pleased that the staff was able to find the funds to include the additional police officers and the other safety officers along the way. I can support this budget. I think we've done good with this and I'm pleased to be able to support it."

Concurrent with adopting the new budget and property tax rates, the City Commission also voted in unison to approve two debt service millage rates that pay back prior bond issues. Those include \$0.1319 per \$1,000 of taxable value to cover the principal and interest for the Turnbull Creek land acquisition bond issue that voters passed in 2018, and \$0.2522 per \$1,000 of taxable value to pay for a 2004 bond election in which citizens approved funding for a police station, three fire stations, an emergency operations center and public sidewalks.

All combined, more than \$12 million in new capital projects and equipment are listed in the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget. Those include items for which the city has been awarded grant money, such as \$600,000 for renovations to the Woman's Club building and \$900,00 to repair and stabilize the Old Fort Wall. Another \$550,000 is budgeted for relocating the city's maintenance operations building at Smith Street and a \$300,000 project would add solar panels on the maintenance operations building. In addition, there is \$2 million budgeted for a Central Beach Flood Mitigation Program involving 30 homes *(which also involves money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA))*. Another \$3 million is budgeted for costs associated with replacing the Barracuda Boulevard Bridge, and \$1,920,000 is included for costs relating to replacing the Fifth Street Bridge. A \$300,000 ambulance also will be funded by Fire Impact fees, and its purchase is listed as an impact fee transfer to the General Fund.

Capital improvement projects and purchases for the general fund account total \$1,299,100, and include:

- ✓ A new fire engine --\$587,000
- ✓ Seven police interceptor SUVs -- \$374,500
- ✓ Air conditioning at the City Gym -- \$75,000
- ✓ Two cutting tools for the Fire Department -- \$68,000

In other action Sept. 28, **City Commissioners unanimously approved the Utilities Commission's Fiscal Year 2022 budget**, with \$66,490,700 in total revenue from electric, water and reclaimed water. The budget also shows total operating and maintenance expenses of \$56,410,650.

In a letter to the city, Utilities Commission General Manager and CEO Joseph Bunch and Director of Finance Efren Chavez wrote that the Fiscal 2022 budget reflects "modest rate increases" for electric service, potable water, and wastewater and reclaimed water services.

City Commissioners weren't in agreement on another Utilities Commission matter relating to an **easement through utility property to extend Williamson Boulevard from Pioneer Trail to SR-44**. The Utilities Commission's tract is over 900 acres of mostly undeveloped property, generally located at the northwest quadrant of the SR-44/I-95 interchange.

Commissioners voted 4-1, with Vice Mayor Jake Sachs dissenting, to approve the utility's agreement with Volusia County to grant an easement for Williamson Boulevard to cross its land.

"It is a water recharge area. I think we have approximately four wells on the property," Vice Mayor Sachs noted. He expressed concern that extending Williamson would open up future development on the property, adding, "It is a major connector. I can see the benefits of that ... But for the sake of potable water, for the sake of having water recharge, I would have to disagree with this extension."

Commissioner Kolody said he was in favor of the road extension, but commented, "When we get down to the construction I have concerns with the mitigation (*mitigating wetlands destruction by purchasing "credits" to replant wetland vegetation elsewhere*). The way things are now, mitigation can be purchased and the benefits go out of New Smyrna Beach. I would like us to look into a way to keep those benefits in our town." He asked to discuss that issue further on a future Commission agenda.

Utilities Commission CEO Bunch said the utility has a wastewater treatment plant on the 953-acre site that would be traversed by the Williamson Boulevard easement. The plant turns wastewater into reclaimed water to be redistributed for irrigation. Bunch said the Utilities Commission also has several raw water production wells on the property, part of its network of 24 wells. About half of the land is wetlands.

"We've got plans for the long-term use of that property" he said, adding that would include installing additional wells, eventually developing a potable water production facility, potentially moving its Canal Street headquarters to the site and developing a solar energy array there.

"We plan for the 50-year horizon," Bunch explained. "We're not thinking 'Oh goodness, we can sell the land for 50 million dollars.' It's more important to us that we have a long-term, sustainable water supply for the community."

The City Commission also voted 5-0 on Sept. 28 to **annex 0.24 acres at 412 Oliver Drive**. Commissioners then unanimously approved ordinances to change the parcel's future land use to Medium Density Residential, and rezone it to Single Family Residential (R-2), in an Airport Overlay Zone.

In other business, Commissioners **renewed five-year contracts with Waste Pro of Florida, Inc.**, to pick up solid waste, vegetative yard waste and bulk waste, as well as recycling materials. The new contracts start Oct. 1 and allow for additional five-year renewals, as well as up to a 4 percent maximum rate increase each year, based on the Consumer Price Index For All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

During negotiations with the city, Waste Pro requested a 3.69 percent rate increase for garbage, yard waste and bulk waste pickups and the same increase for recycling collection. The company noted its overall cost of labor, materials, fuel and vehicles has risen significantly, to the point it needed to seek higher rates.

Lastly, City Commissioners unanimously agreed to extend a city program to **reduce building permit fees** by up to \$5,000 per parcel for another six months, until March 29, 2022. The city began implementing the fee reduction plan on March 29 this year to meet the requirements of a July 2019 law passed by the Florida Legislature.

###