



**CITY OF PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA
BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2009 5:01 P.M.**

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Friedman, Albers, Wallace, Goldberg, McCormick

CITY EMPLOYEES PRESENT: Dave Drury, Finance; Rick Keeney, Public Works; Tom Jackson, Utilities; Phil Wickstrom, Human Resources; Dennis Murphy, Growth Management; Kathy Dailey, City Manager's Office; Butch Arenal, Police; Robert Hancock, Fire; City Manager Kunik; City Clerk Foster

Mayor Friedman called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. He reported for fiscal year (FY) 2010 the City's calculated rollback millage rate was 3.0460 mils, while the proposed millage was 2.6996 mils, which was an 11.37% reduction of the rollback rate. He advised those in attendance who wished to discuss the method of assessing canal maintenance fees, that same was not a part of today's action. He advised the canal advisory committees were researching the present and alternative methodologies for future consideration. He then announced the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had approved the City to go out to bid for the first phase of the Linear Park in the amount of \$577,000 of stimulus funds.

PUBLIC HEARING

A Resolution adopting a tentative millage rate for the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, for Fiscal Year 2009/2010 and setting a date, time, and place of public hearing to consider the final millage rate.

Mayor Friedman read the resolution by title. He then called three times for public comment.

Mr. Phil Paresi inquired as to the previous year's millage rate.

Mayor Friedman responded last year's millage rate was 2.5689, adding the proposed rate was an approximate 5% increase. He explained the funds realized from the increase were to be utilized for road paving.

Councilmember Albers **MOVED** to close the public hearing, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Wallace.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

Councilmember Goldberg **MOVED** approval, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Albers.

VOTING AYE: Goldberg, Albers, McCormick, Friedman.

VOTING NAY: Wallace.

MOTION CARRIED.

A Resolution adopting a tentative budget for the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, for Fiscal Year 2009/2010 and setting a date, time, and place of public hearing to consider the final budget.

Mayor Friedman read the resolution by title. He then called three times for public comment.

Mr. Steve Wookert asked for information as to what was being increased or decreased in the budget.

Mayor Friedman responded budget discussions had been ongoing since January, 2009. He stated the total property tax revenues were approximately 11% less than the previous year, adding the total general fund revenues were down approximately 3.5%.

Mr. Wookert asked what caused the decrease, confirming every line item had been considered to cut out any unnecessary expenditures while maintaining the same level of service.

Mayor Friedman responded every aspect of the budget had been reviewed and numerous budget cuts were taken, including the workforce itself. He stated every department contributed to the reductions.

Mr. Wookert asked if it was possible to freeze the present budget level for the next few years.

Mayor Friedman responded same was generally the intent. He stated this was the third year in a row that the total taxes collected and the total budget had been reduced. He opined if the housing market remained the same, a similar situation would occur in the next year.

Mr. Wookert asked if the City had a 3 to 5 year plan to help avoid unnecessary costs.

Mayor Friedman responded affirmatively.

Councilmember Albers added only one third of the general fund budget came from property taxes, explaining sales tax and other revenues had also decreased, causing the shortfall.

Mayor Friedman pointed out the public safety budget itself exceeded the property taxes realized by the City.

Councilmember Albers **MOVED** to close the public hearing, **SECONDED** by Councilmember McCormick.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

Councilmember Goldberg **MOVED** approval, **SECONDED** by Councilmember McCormick.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

NOTE: City Council recessed and reconvened as the Punta Gorda Isles (PGI) Canal Maintenance Assessment District (CMAD) at 5:19 p.m.

PUNTA GORDA ISLES CANAL MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, as the governing body of the Punta Gorda Isles Canal Maintenance Assessment District, establishing Fiscal Year 2009/2010 assessments for canal maintenance and repairs; finding a special benefit to the owners of lots assessed; providing for collection of such assessments by the tax collector as nonadvalorem assessments; and providing an effective date.

Mayor Friedman read the resolution by title. He reported the proposed fee was \$500 per lot and \$.05 per square foot for multi-family properties. He then called three times for public comment.

Mr. Phil Paresi maintained this was the wrong time to raise taxes, adding people were borrowing money against their homes to pay their taxes. He mentioned other elements of the economy that were affecting many residents. He then spoke about an experience wherein his seawall cap was refused for repair, stating it took five years to accomplish same. He reiterated his opposition to the increase.

Mayor Friedman apologized on behalf of the City for his experience, suggesting anyone who had a similar situation to contact the City Manager or a member of City Council for assistance.

Mr. Bill Dixon, PGI Canal Advisory Committee (CAC), provided background information on the seawalls and the assessments throughout the years, adding the increased rate would assist the City in maintaining the seawalls to the standard they should be.

Discussion ensued with regard to the total length of seawalls and the amount needing repair or replacement at this time.

Mr. Dixon then spoke regarding the assessment method, stating the PGI CAC would be evaluating same to make a recommendation to City Council. He then displayed photographs of seawalls in varying levels of disrepair. He concluded by stating the disrepair of the seawalls hurt the value of the properties.

Mr. Wookert questioned the number of feet replaced in this fiscal year.

Mr. Dixon responded approximately 3,000 feet of seawall and 3,800 feet of seawall cap.

Discussion ensued with regard to the amount of repairs that would be possible with the increased assessments.

Mr. Wookert asked if the additional assessment was for a three year period.

Mayor Friedman stated the PGI CAC recommended same; however, City Council considered the assessment each year.

Mr. Peter Chamick acknowledged the need for increased maintenance; however, he felt the funds being expended for sidewalks and palm trees that nobody used could be reallocated to the seawalls. He asserted government funding could be applied for in order to keep property owners from funding everything during a depressed economy. He then stated nonresidents were utilizing the City's boat ramps and waterways for free, while the property owners had to pay for same.

Ms. Laurie Chamick stated residents with larger lots paid more for same as well as paying higher taxes for same, thus should not be charged more for the canal assessment as was being considered.

Mayor Friedman pointed out the canal assessment was a fee rather than a tax, explaining the purpose of same was to capture the costs of the maintenance program each year. He stated it was appropriate to consider the method of assessment from time to time, adding if a change was proposed, public hearings would be held. He then explained gas taxes and other funds could not be applied to the seawalls, which meant the annual fees of the district must be utilized for same. He concluded grant funds were applied for when they became available.

Councilmember Goldberg added funds collected for each canal district must be expended within the specific district.

Mr. Don Levy asked if the bulkhead repair was through a single contract.

Mayor Friedman responded the seawalls were done by one contractor, adding the City went out to bid periodically for same. He stated City staff constructed the seawall panels in-house, adding the seawall caps were done by both the staff and the contractor depending on the condition and location.

Mr. Levy inquired how often the contractor was bid out.

Mr. Rick Keeney, Public Works Director, responded the contracts were typically for a three year period with a three year renewal.

Discussion ensued with regard to the bid process.

Mr. James Castanza stated he knew seawall maintenance was needed; however, he voiced concern with the manner in which the dredging was being performed. He alleged they did not have proper equipment to properly dredge the canals,

recommending some accountability be put in place to ascertain if the dredging was being done properly.

Mr. Wookert stated he had a bad experience with his boat running aground in one of the canals, adding he damaged his prop.

Councilmember Goldberg **MOVED** to close the public hearing, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Albers.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

Councilmember Albers **MOVED** approval, **SECONDED** by Councilmember McCormick.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

NOTE: The PGI CMAD adjourned and reconvened as the Burnt Store Isles (BSI) CMAD at 5:55 p.m.

BURNT STORE ISLES CANAL MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, as the governing body of the Burnt Store Isles Canal Maintenance Assessment District, establishing Fiscal Year 2009/2010 assessments for canal maintenance and repairs; finding a special benefit to the owners of lots assessed; providing for collection of such assessments by the tax collector as nonadvalorem assessments; and providing an effective date.

Mayor Friedman read the resolution by title. He then called three times for public comment.

Mr. David Shalt spoke with regard to the cost to repair the seawall and seawall cap, noting the seawalls within BSI were newer and did not require as much maintenance. He stated based upon same, there was no reason to increase the fee.

Mayor Friedman responded there was no increase proposed, adding the \$400 fee would be maintained.

Councilmember Wallace **MOVED** to close the public hearing, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Albers.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

Councilmember Wallace **MOVED** approval, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Albers.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

NOTE: The BSI CMAD adjourned and reconvened as the City Council at 5:58 p.m.

Councilmember Albers stated many good questions were asked this date, suggesting a good place to receive information was the weekly report prepared by the City Manager. He stated same could be emailed.

Councilmember McCormick thanked the PGI CAC for the work performed to justify the increase in canal assessment.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Mr. Jack Stanley pointed out the canal fee could easily double over the years due to the amount of necessary maintenance, recommending a per foot method be utilized for the assessment as same was more equitable.

Councilmember Goldberg stated public meetings would be held during the consideration of the various methodologies.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk