



**City of North Port**  
City Manager's Office

**Interoffice Memorandum**

**To:** Commissioners  
City Manager Jerome Fletcher  
Assistant City Manager Jason Yarborough  
Assistant City Manager Julie Bellia

**From:** Todd Miles, Legislative Analyst

**Date:** July 17, 2023

**Subject:** 2024 Legislative Priorities

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The 2024 State Legislative Session will convene January 9, 2024, two months earlier than the 2023 session, due to the general elections to be held in 2024. Legislative committees will begin their deliberations in September and, accordingly, City staff suggests that the Commission approve its 2024 Legislative priorities at its September 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

On a parallel track, County staff is currently formulating the County's priorities for review by the BCC at its August 29<sup>th</sup> meeting. Set forth below for your consideration are several bullet points provided by County staff as potential issues of common concern to both the County and the City, which you may wish to incorporate into the City's 2024 priorities. If you would like further information from the County on any of these issues, please let us know and we'll follow-up with County staff.

- State funding of regional watershed restoration projects and of programs to monitor and reduce nutrient loading in watersheds and stormwater systems.
- State partnering with the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority.
- Opposed to the preemption of local ordinances related to water quality, water use, and water supply.
- Indexing of local Gas Taxes for inflation to support funding increased costs of operation, maintenance, and construction of transportation infrastructure.
- Advancement of the S.R. 681 and Interstate 75 interchange expansion project.
- Advancement of an interchange in the vicinity of Yorkshire Street and Interstate 75, and North Raintree Boulevard.
- Full allocation of the Sadowski funds for homelessness and local programs.
- Policies, strategies, and funding that help local communities prepare resiliency efforts.

- Opposed to the preemption of local fertilizer ordinances.
- Opposed to any legislation that would limit the ability of local governments to franchise collection of solid waste.

In addition, Chief Garrison has indicated that the City Police Department would support the following County priorities:

- SUPPORT state funding of jail diversion and efforts to reduce juvenile detention.
  - SUPPORT increasing the fees provided for in Chapter 983 Florida Statutes to fund Teen Courts.
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Following are updates on some of the issues (**bold** as stated) in the 2023 priorities:

**Infrastructure Funding - supports funding resources for infrastructure including:**

*Widening of local roads leading to evacuation routes* – the Governor approved a \$1.5 million grant for storm mitigation elements in the Price Blvd Project via local appropriation request which was included in the State budget approved by the Legislature. This amount approximates the expenditures anticipated by City staff during the first year of the project.

*Construction of new 1-75 interchanges in North Port* – The project encompassing new interchanges at Yorkshire Street and Raintree Boulevard was included in the list of Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Funding Priorities approved by the MPO Board on March 27, 2023. MPO has indicated that certain local infrastructure improvements must be completed by the City and County before the MPO can request an Interchange Justification Report to trigger state level analysis and action. To support efforts to complete such improvements, the City Engineer recommends that the City seek (1) in conjunction with Charlotte County, legislative or other funding to conduct a feasibility study to address Veteran's Blvd., Harbor Blvd., Raintree Blvd., and Hillsborough Blvd. intersections improvements; and (2) in conjunction with DeSoto and possibly Charlotte County, legislative or other funding to conduct a feasibility study to address Raintree Blvd. extension into Desoto County (King's Highway).

*Water quality improvements, storm water management, providing of septic to sewer conversion incentives, testing and resiliency* – the City has been awarded a 2023 federal appropriation of \$2.3 million to fund construction of sewer lines and vacuum stations related to sewer to septic conversion.

*Broadband internet access for all* - City IT has advised that the City will not be getting into the broadband business due to entry barriers which have been explained to the Commission (e.g. private carriers will not use City provided conduits). The City is actively working with private cellular carriers to increase capacity, tower locations, and broadband signals.

**Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Spring - supports legislation defining Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Spring each as an "Outstanding Florida Spring" and providing related funding to preserve and enhance these springs**

HB 1505/SB 1134 were filed as identical bills and if approved would have provided for designation of Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Spring each as an "Outstanding Florida Spring" in accordance with the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act enacted in 2016 (Springs Act). For the reasons which have been extensively discussed with the Commission, a determination was made by the City Manager to request that our state legislators pause pursuit of such legislation.

**Mental Health - support for legislation that will provide funding for early intervention and treatment of mental health issues for all ages.**

No such legislation was considered during the 2023 session.

**Affordable Housing - support for legislation, all initiatives and incentives to support affordable housing projects, including use of the Sadowski Fund for local housing assistance as intended and approved by statewide voters.**

Legislation to provide a comprehensive statewide workforce housing strategy, SB102 cited as the "Live Local Act," was enacted early in the 2023 session. Following is a summary of the key provisions in SB 102 applicable to the City.

*Rent Control Prohibited.* FS 125.0103 and FS 166.043 amended to provide that a municipality may not adopt or maintain in effect any law, ordinance, rule, or other measure that would have the effect of imposing controls on rents.

*Municipality Approval of Affordable Housing Projects.* FS 166.04151 amended (expiring October 1, 2033) to provide that a municipality must authorize multifamily and mixed-use residential as allowable uses in any area zoned for commercial or mixed use if at least 40 percent of the residential units in a proposed multifamily rental development are, for a period of at least 30 years, affordable as defined in s. 420.0004. Notwithstanding any other law, local ordinance, or regulation to the contrary, an application for such development may not require a zoning or land use change or a comprehensive plan amendment. For mixed-use residential projects, at least 65 percent of the total square footage must be used for residential purposes.

A municipality may not restrict the density of a proposed development authorized under this subsection below the highest allowed density on any unincorporated land in the county where residential development is allowed.

A municipality may not restrict the height of a proposed development authorized under this subsection below the highest currently allowed height for a commercial or residential development located in its jurisdiction within 1 mile of the proposed development or 3 stories, whichever is higher.

An application for a proposed development authorized under this subsection must be administratively approved and may not require further action by the governing board of the municipality if the development satisfies the municipality's land development regulations for

multifamily developments in areas zoned for such use, which include, but are not limited to, regulations relating to setbacks and parking requirements.

A municipality must consider reducing parking requirements for a proposed development authorized under this subsection to the greatest extent possible if the development is located within one-half mile of a major transit stop and the major transit stop is accessible from the development.

Except as otherwise provided in this section, a development authorized under this subsection must comply with all applicable state and local laws and regulations.

*Disposition of Municipal Property for Affordable Housing.* FS 166.0451 amended to provide that by October 1, 2023 and every three years thereafter, each municipality shall prepare an inventory list of all real property within its jurisdiction to which the municipality or any dependent special district within its boundaries holds fee simple title which is appropriate for use as affordable housing. Each municipality shall make the inventory list publicly available on its website to encourage potential development.

In addition to existing authorized disposition, such properties may be used for affordable housing through a long-term land lease requiring the development and maintenance of affordable housing,

Municipalities are encouraged to adopt best practices for surplus land programs, including, but not limited to:

- (a) Establishing eligibility criteria for the receipt or purchase of surplus land by developers;
- (b) Making the process for requesting surplus lands publicly available; and
- (c) Ensuring long-term affordability through ground leases by retaining the right of first refusal to purchase property that would be sold or offered at market rate and by requiring reversion of property not used for affordable housing within a certain timeframe.

*Tax Exemption for Land Leased by Nonprofit Corporations for Affordable Housing.* FS 196.1978 amended to provide that land that is owned entirely by a nonprofit corporation and is leased for a minimum of 99 years for the purpose of, and is predominantly used for, providing housing to low income persons or families is exempt from ad valorem taxation. Definitions for terms such as “affordable housing,” “newly constructed,” “substantially completed,” as well as income eligibility criteria, rent parameters, property owner application requirements, nonprofit corporation certification requirements, property appraiser determination requirements are all included in this amendment, which first applies to the 2024 tax roll and is repealed December 31, 2059.

*Municipal Ordinances Providing Tax Exemption.* FS 196.1979 amended to provide that the governing body of a municipality may adopt an ordinance to exempt those portions of property used to provide affordable housing meeting the requirements of this section.

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**Emergency Medical Transportation –**

The priority expressed the City's support for increased Medicaid reimbursement funding for Public Emergency Medical Transportation. The priority also expressed the City's opposition to legislation that would mandate counties to include recommendations of specified districts when developing standards for certificates of public convenience and necessity (COPCN) for life support or air ambulance services. No such legislation for either priority was considered during the 2023 session.

**Suncoast Technical College**

The priority expressed the City's support for fully funding to ensure all facility and growing student population needs are met. City staff has been working extensively with STC management to explore various sources of such funding.

**Property Insurance** - reforms of the property insurance industry were addressed in comprehensive legislation approved in the December 2022 special session.

**COMMISSION APPROVAL SEPTEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>**

Staff requests that the Commission be prepared to discuss any new priorities and provide final approval of the City's 2024 legislative priorities at its September 12<sup>th</sup> meeting after also considering: the 2023 legislative priorities, the updates on those issues outlined above, and the County's potential issues of common concern also outlined above.

As State Legislative committees will begin meeting in September and throughout the fall in anticipation of session commencement in January, the City's 2024 legislative priorities after Commission approval will be promptly shared with our lobbyist in Tallahassee so he can keep us informed of related bills being filed and pending committee action on such bills. It is anticipated that the Sarasota Delegation, chaired by Sen. Gruters, will meet in late fall and we will work with the Mayor and Commission on the City's presentation for that meeting.