

Introduction and Context

In the Spring of 2024, the Commission made the strategic decision to shift its approach to a bond referendum. Initially, the focus was on a single project—the new North Port Police Headquarters (HQ). However, recognizing the broader need for borrowing authority to address declared emergencies and imminent infrastructure failures citywide, the Commission chose to prioritize a more comprehensive borrowing approach.

Despite the referendum narrowly failing by only 316 votes out of over 45,000 cast, the results provided critical insight into community sentiment and areas requiring further engagement and education.

Post-Referendum Actions

Following the referendum, the city staff refocused on the Police HQ project. Public meetings and town halls were previously held to educate the public and gather feedback. Key concerns emerged around cost and the absence of a detailed budget plan, which staff has since addressed, to the best of our ability. As directed by the Commission, staff has completed 100% of the design plans for the Police HQ, which you will have the opportunity to discuss later today.

Special Election Planning

Tomorrow's discussion includes the timing and scope of a special election scheduled for March 11, 2025, with ballot language submissions due to the Supervisor of Elections (SOE) by January 3, 2025. On December 6th, we received an update from the SOE indicating the cost of the special election would be \$131,000. Unlike prior communications, the SOE clarified that no additional staffing or logistical support from City staff would be required. The City of North Port can submit a later date and pending SOE approval it will occur later in the year providing more time to engage the public with decisions made in January 2025.

Key Questions for Discussion

1. Timing of the Special Election for Borrowing Authority

- **Staff Recommendation:** May 2025
 - **Rationale:**
 - Aligns with Law Enforcement Recognition Month to highlight the Police HQ project.
 - Captures a larger voting population, including seasonal residents ("snowbirds").
 - Provides additional time for fiscal and economic impact analyses, as well as comprehensive CIP documentation, all of which will be ready for Commission review by January 2025.

2. Inclusion of Infrastructure Projects on the Ballot

- **Staff Recommendation:**
 - Prioritize projects with the most critical need.
 - Clearly define and justify each project to ensure alignment with the City's strategic priorities and community needs.

3. Ballot Question on the New Police HQ

- **Staff Discussion Points:**
 - Final design plans and estimated costs will be presented today.
 - **Proposed Funding Sources:**
 - **\$25M** from Surtax IV rearrangement (no taxpayer impact).
 - Reduced capacity due to bond rate for Price Blvd
 - **\$5M** internal transfer: repurposing the current Police HQ for Development Services, addressing City Hall spacing needs.
 - **\$20M** State Grant: the project's shovel-ready status positions it strongly for state support.
 - Remaining costs determined by Commission to be included in the borrowing request. (**Approximately \$35M-72M**)

4. Debt Capacity Considerations

- The City's current overall borrowing capacity is approximately \$150M. Strategic prioritization is critical to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Next Steps

- Review and finalize ballot language for:
 - Borrowing authority for declared disaster recovery.
 - Removal of residency requirements for the City Attorney and City Clerk. Discuss the impact of extending the CAO search (advertising & salary)
- Discuss and decide on the timing of the special election.
- Evaluate and prioritize infrastructure projects for inclusion in the ballot.
- Finalize cost considerations and funding strategy for the new Police HQ.

These discussions will shape the City's approach to addressing critical infrastructure needs while maintaining transparency and fiscal responsibility. Your input is essential to ensuring these initiatives align with the community's vision and the City's long-term goals.