



2018
LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES



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WATER MANAGEMENT



The City of Stuart **SUPPORTS** the use of State dollars for local water quality projects, alternative water supply technologies, and septic to sewer conversion programs.

WATER QUALITY PROJECTS

In order to curb the harmful impacts of freshwater discharges into the Saint Lucie River, more State funding is needed for capital projects designed to retain and treat billions of gallons of freshwater, from wherever it may originate. Although State dollars have been dedicated to create new retention areas south of Lake Okeechobee, additional funding is needed for water projects north, east, and west of the Lake; and for projects that treat stormwater runoff at its source. The City of Stuart has made a concerted effort to reduce local pollution through local projects, but additional State funding is needed, particularly for the Saint Lucie River Initiative to build on these critical milestones.

ALTERNATIVE WATER SUPPLY

As technology improves and the demand for potable water increases, public and private utilities will need to invest in new infrastructure. These capital projects will include investments in Reverse Osmosis technology, reuse of reclaimed water, and projects designed to mitigate saltwater intrusion. The City of Stuart has identified Reverse Osmosis as a viable and necessary component in meeting the future needs of its utility customers. The EPA's Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR) advisories have only increased the urgency for local governments to invest in new technology. As a consequence, the City strongly supports bolstering State funding assistance.



SEPTIC TO SEWER CONVERSIONS

Florida's water quality problems are myriad; not solely a result of nutrient loading from freshwater discharges. Localized pollution is also a direct consequence of septage leaking into freshwater rivers and estuarial systems. As the water table elevation in Florida is inherently shallow, the impacts of septic tank leakage is problematic throughout. In order to curb this growing threat, State agency programs are needed to encourage homeowners to switch from septic tanks and instead, connect to sewer lines. The City of Stuart supports state investment in match grants and direct assistance for homeowners to incentivize new sewer connections wherever possible.



LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT



The City of Stuart **OPPOSES** any effort to limit local self-government or establish general law undermining 'Home Rule' authority as it is provided in the Florida Constitution.

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

In 2017, legislation was filed to sunset CRAs, prevent future CRAs from forming, and effectively preempt any new CRA related capital projects after October of 2018. This new preemption was a direct response to criticisms of a few CRAs in the State, which have failed to follow best management practices. A "broad brush" approach to reforming CRAs should not be used as a means of punishing communities that have followed good management practices and who's projects have been well vetted by its community and stakeholders. The City of Stuart opposes any piece of legislation that would undo years of critical community redevelopment and undermine it's local right to self-govern.

REGULATION OF BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS

Legislation filed in the Florida House in 2017 proposed the deregulation of businesses at the local level. This would have included any occupational and professional licensing. Local governments across the State would also have no ability to manage their communities according to the wishes of their residents. Instead, a broad "general law" would need a proposal in the Legislature and to be passed in order to increase even the most minor of regulations. Not only would this process be entirely unviable, residents across the State would not have any input into the growth and development of their community. The City of Stuart opposes such legislation preempting its 'Home Rule.'

INFRASTRUCTURE SALES SURTAX

As revenue sources for municipalities continue to dwindle, new local taxing options are needed to maintain current service levels and expand for a growing population. Additionally, the State continues to hinder local government growth with unfunded mandates, further restricting each communities ability to respond to local economy dynamics. The Infrastructure Sales Surtax is both an excellent revenue tool for local governments, and represents an inequity in revenue options for municipalities. The City of Stuart supports legislation that would allow a municipality to adopt its own infrastructure sales surtax through a referendum of city voters and taxpayers.





EQUITABLE STATE FUNDING



The City of Stuart **SUPPORTS** bolstering State funding for water infrastructure, local capital improvements, and creating an improved transportation funding formula.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Every year, local governments around Florida request State funding for capital improvements projects. These appropriation requests total more than \$1 billion annually and only a fraction of which are funded in any given year. Many smaller counties and municipalities simply lack the resources to lobby the legislature effectively. Cities like Stuart have aged infrastructure that is either nearing its effective end-life or will need to be replaced within the next several years. The City of Stuart needs to modernize its water treatment facility by switching to a Reverse Osmosis system. Without State assistance, local taxpayers and utility customers will be entirely responsible for these capital costs.

LOCAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

As a fundamental taxing principle, local communities should see their hard-earned tax dollars return back to their community in the form of services and provisions. Unfortunately in recent years, not every local community has experienced an equitable return on investment. One of the greatest challenges for small counties and municipalities is acquiring funding for project engineering and design. Capital projects that are "shovel-ready" are far more likely to be funded by the State, but not every community can afford it. The City of Stuart supports any legislation that would provide additional grant assistance to smaller communities for design, engineering, and finally, project construction.

TRANSPORTATION

As Florida's gas tax revenue continues to decline with the onset of more fuel-efficient vehicles, and without a more reliable taxing source, local governments will feel even greater strain on their future budgets. The City of Stuart supports SB 384 which requires the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to provide the Legislature with both a report on the effect of projected electric vehicle usage on taxes, fees, and other surcharges, and recommended solutions to these challenges. In addition, the City supports future legislation that would provide new revenue sources for local transportation projects and a new funding system that incorporates the use of electric vehicles.





PROTECTION OF REVENUE SOURCES



The City of Stuart **OPPOSES** any legislation that would erode the CST, LBT, or preempt or prohibit a local government from charging an impact fee for new developments.

COMMUNICATION SERVICES TAX

The Florida CST includes both a state tax for and a gross receipts tax for communication services and direct-to-home satellite services. Local governments may also levy a local CST at their discretion as provided by general law. In recent years however, bills have been filed seeking to erode the total CST levied. The City of Stuart opposes any reduction or preemption of the local CST tax. Without this critically important levy, the City would lose over \$900k in revenue and be forced to reduce overall services to its residents. The City fully supports reforming the CST in a manner that is revenue neutral and that provides for a more broad and equitable tax base across the State.

LOCAL BUSINESS TAX

Legislation filed during the 2017 Legislative Session would have limited the total business tax levied by any local government to \$25 or less per business. For the City of Stuart, the local business tax accounts for 3% of the City Budget and the rate for each business varies, depending on the business type. As a business may qualify under multiple categories and operate with different functions and services, multiple levies may apply. The lost revenue with a proposed \$25 levy cap would not even fund the cost of administering the tax in the City. As such, Stuart opposes any legislation that undermines basic "home rule" authorities and undercuts critically important local revenue sources.

IMPACT FEES

Impact fees are mechanisms used by local governments to ensure that new developments pay for critical infrastructure needs. Transportation concurrency is a state law requiring local governments in Florida to adopt a comprehensive plan and implement regulations requiring adequate basic services and facilities that are concurrent with any new development. The City of Stuart opposes any legislation that would erode the essential 'home rule' authority to set impact fees. The City also supports legislation that reforms the requirements and enforcement of the Florida Impact Fee Act in order to hold counties more accountable who's methodology does not comply with State law.





PUBLIC SAFETY & WELLNESS



The City of Stuart **SUPPORTS** legislation requiring ALF's to provide a power generator during emergencies, enhancing railway safety, and reforming sober home regulations.

NURSING HOME GENERATORS

Following lessons learned from recent Hurricane Irma, the importance of protecting the most vulnerable members of each community is now a priority for emergency managers throughout the State. Both nursing homes and assisted living facilities are required by law to draft and maintain emergency management plans. However, these plans are not required to include the use of backup generators to provide air conditioning to residents after a storm. The City of Stuart supports legislation reforming requirements for emergency management plans of nursing homes and assisted living facilities to include the use of backup generators in event of power outage.

RAILWAY SAFETY

In recent years, local governments throughout the Treasure Coast region in particular have contested plans by All Aboard Florida (AAF) to add a new high-speed passenger rail network between Miami and Orlando. While these plans have moved forward with federal and state approval, many local governments including the local taxpayers are also concerned about the safety of railway crossings. The City of Stuart has a few crossings within its urban area that it would be required to maintain any railway improvements including safety related additions at its own costs. The City supports any new legislation requiring AAF to improve and maintain crossings at its own expense.

SOBER HOME REGULATIONS

A public health emergency involving heroin and other more accessible synthetic opioids was created once access to prescription medications became more heavily regulated. In Florida in particular, the recovery residence industry has little oversight compared to other areas of the healthcare system. Statistically, more than 75 percent of all patients treated in Florida sober homes are from out of State. Municipalities are then forced to assume the unavoidable obligation of higher property crime rates and managing "new homeless" residents who were once sober home patients. The City of Stuart supports legislation that would reform sober home regulations by improving accountability.



WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SUPPORT



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