

# Budget proposal shows finances stable in Lighthouse Point

By Judy Wilson

PELICAN STAFF

**Lighthouse Point** – Taxpayers here will enjoy a slight decrease in the millage rate in 2018-19 thanks to a 7 percent increase in property values.

The assessed value of the city is \$2.4 billion, the highest in its history.

Residents will however pay a fire fee \$15 higher and adding \$100,000 to the general fund. The fee is among the lowest in the county.

Commissioners got their first look at the budget being proposed for the new fiscal year Tuesday. It drew little comment.

Later, Commissioner Earl Maucker responded to *The Pelican* saying, “Values continue to increase in Lighthouse Point enabling us to keep the tax rate down and still have funds to operate and plan for the future.”

Major capital improvements here are dependent on the passage of a \$40 million bond issue in November. Addressing this Maucker said, “We’re hoping to pass the bond issue for a new fire station, and improvements to recreation, public works and the library, but until then we have a budget that will take care of our needs.”

The proposed \$16 million general fund is up from this year’s anticipated \$15.5 million, largely due to increases in salaries and benefits including pension contributions.

The building department shows the highest increase in expenditures, almost 10 percent, due to outsourcing that department, and includes \$175,000 to rewrite the building code. It is an enterprise account, funded by permit fees.

Code enforcement’s budget will increase with the addition of a part time enforcement officer to work weekends.

Increases in public works are higher than normal due to Hurricane Irma. Some of that spending is reimbursable from FEMA.

Funding for the library is up 10 percent and includes a part time children’s librarian.

Parks and Recreation which oversees three parks and funds

the city’s special events is showing a slight decrease in spending in 2018-19 due to the fact the tot lot at Dan Witt Park has been completed.

The largest departments, police and fire, show 7 and 2 percent increases respectively due to pension contributions negotiated by the unions, in addition to the contributions that will now be made to the Florida Retirement System.

A capital improvement budget of \$514,000 includes vehicles for police and fire departments, public works equipment and purchases to improve technology.

The general fund is balanced with \$83,694 carried over from prior year surpluses.

**What it costs to run the city**  
 City Commission - \$120,265  
 Mayor - \$47,642

**Finance/Administration** - \$864,685  
**City Attorney** - \$159,480  
**Support Services** - \$924,440 [insurance premiums]  
**Police** - \$6 million  
**Fire** - \$4 million  
**Building** - \$830,129 [financed by permit revenue]  
**Code** - \$314,541 [offset by fines]  
**Public Works** - \$1.6 million  
**Community Bus** - \$47,600 [half paid by county]  
**Library** - \$422,676  
**Recreation** - \$704,696  
**Tennis Center** - \$242,000, includes \$136,000 from parks and recreation budget; fees make up the rest.  
**Stormwater Utility Fund** - \$690,500 [storm water fee]  
**Garbage and Trash** - \$2.5 million – contract still in negotiation

# Plans for new city hall, mixed-use development move on in Oakland Park

By Judy Vik

PELICAN STAFF

**Oakland Park** - No formal agreements have been signed, but after several months of negotiations this city has a “handshake agreement” with Integra Investments for mixed-use development on West Dixie Highway.

Broward County will provide more than \$1 million in incentives for development of the two city-owned lots north and south of Park Lane West.

In order to entice quality development, the city needed to commit to some guarantees, City Manager

David Hebert said. “The developer needed a long-term tenant. The anchor tenant will be city hall operations, both those at the existing facility on Main Street and those in the Municipal Building on Dixie Highway.”

Hebert said he wanted to dispel some mis-impressions. “We still own city hall, and no determination has been made on what will happen to this building,” he said. “That doesn’t mean the city couldn’t build its own city hall again someday.”

“This will create enormous

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# New city hall

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opportunity for the city if we go forward with this," Hebert said.

The CRA plan first called for finding a developer for a mixed-use development on the West Dixie lots in 2005. That concept also was in the 2012 and 2017 planbook.

Hebert said the mixed-use development will centralize municipal operations, generate new taxable value, add additional parking and open other opportunities for development.

Sale price of the land is \$2.550 million. If approved, the sale would happen in 2019.

In July 2017, the city hired Zyscovich Architects for design concepts.

As proposed, the south lot building will contain ground floor retail, live/work units and city hall offices with parking for 343 vehicles.

The building on the north lot will be a mix of ground floor retail and 87 residential units.

The city must commit to a 15-year lease for city hall spaces with two options for five-year renewals. The lease starts at \$26.07 per square foot and goes up.

The city will agree to waive impact fees of \$260,000, make \$500,000 in roadway improvements and increase grant opportunities for retail businesses by \$260,000.

"The numbers may seem daunting, but this meets so many of our goals," Hebert said. That includes a hardened facility [for city hall], new development, public parking and increased ad valorem revenues.

The city has owned the vacant lots for years.

"We will come back to the commission with a purchase and sale agreement, development agreement and lease agreement," Hebert told the commission last week.

The proposed development, previously referred to as the West Dixie lots, is now called Oakland Park Square. "This will be a public square and gathering place with ourselves as anchor tenant," Hebert said.

The existing city hall was constructed in 1963 and repurposed from a police and fire station. According to information provided by the city, the building is not a hardened structure, has obsolete electrical equipment



This rendering is of Oakland Park Square, a proposed development on West Dixie Highway. The city is now in negotiations with Integra Investments over the development. As proposed, the building to the south would contain retail, live/work units, City Hall and 343 parking spaces. The building on the north lot would contain retail and 87 residential units. [Courtesy, city of Oakland Park]

and a deficient roof. Commission chambers have inadequate space.

The city's 2010 Facility Master Plan recommended constructing a new city hall due to its deficiencies.

Because of that, no estimates on hardening it have been undertaken Hebert said.

Integra Investments is a Miami-based private equity and real estate development firm, founded 12 years ago. Its projects include offices, multi-family and mixed-use, said Paulo Tavares de Melo, a principal with the firm.

Among their current projects are Aventura Park Square and Hallandale ArtSquare, a multi-family development on North Federal Highway.

"We're very excited about Oakland Park," de Melo said. "This is the kind of challenge that motivates us. We're excited to work with the community. Thanks for selecting us as the developer. We look forward to bringing this project to fruition."

Architect Bernard Zyscovich said, "You have a

very visionary team."

He mentioned the city's culinary district and said, "Maybe we're an accelerator to what you have started."

"We're not dazzlers. We just do our job well," Zyscovich said.

He noted that the city's administrative functions would be on a top floor, above the parking structure.

Events and meetings could be held on the rooftop.

Zyscovich said he's very excited about the architecture. "It has more of an industrial feel with steel frames. We want it to be noteworthy and iconic."

Commissioner John Adornato said, "When we bought this land, there were questions about what we were doing. This is the implementation of a vision. This is the city putting its money where its mouth is. This is the next logical step to take in implementation of a vision on the books for a long time."

Commissioner Michael Carn thanked the development partners "for wrapping your arms around the vision. We

waited a long time for this cohesion."

"Yes, we're taking a risk. I like risk. Hats off to the team, staff and commission," Carn said.

"The building is inspiring. This sets the stage for what we're looking for on the west side of Dixie," said Commissioner Matthew Sparks.

Sparks asked if a proposed occupancy date of 2021 is realistic.

Hebert responded, "We have a fortuitous wind at our backs. The economy is strong and favorable, and this developer is anxious to get started."

Vice Mayor Sara Guevrekian said she wanted to dispel some rumors and asked what the commission approved by awarding quotes and authorizing negotiations with Integra.

City Attorney DJ Doody said three components are yet to be approved. A purchase and sales agreement has to be okayed by ordinance. That may be on the commission agenda in July. Then a development agreement will

be negotiated, and terms of a commercial lease are subject to commission approval.

Guevrekian said the two 68-foot high buildings are "cavernous" and "not my idea of a small town downtown."

"Everyone always wants more and more height. Sixty-eight feet tall is practically seven stories. I'm uncomfortable with that."

Noting that these are very small lots, she asked about setbacks and how much grass there would be. Alex Dambach, planning supervisor, said there will be a 12-foot buffer on the east and 10-foot buffers on the sides.

"There's fear of the unknown, and there's some risk involved. I think it's a worthy risk," said Mayor Tim Loneragan. "The vision has been there for 14-15 years."

The public can join the discussion of the proposed Oakland Park Square Tuesday, July 10, 8 a.m. at the Community Redevelopment Agency meeting at Jaco Pastorius Community Center, 1098 NE 40 Ct. For more information call 954-630-4251.

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