



Legislation Text

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Agenda Item Name:

2020 Infrastructure Surtax Discussion

Presenter:

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Deputy County Manager

Description:

Discussion of a 2020 ballot initiative for an infrastructure surtax funding priorities and supporting policy direction with a focus on building greater community resilience.

Recommended Action:

1. Discuss resilience priorities and provide direction to staff.
2. Direct City and County staff to make a cooperative effort coordinating outreach to community stakeholders, other municipalities, and advisory boards on surtax priorities for greater community resiliency.
3. Report back to the Commissions no later than end of March 2020, with a preliminary report and draft interlocal agreements.

Prior Board Motions:

November 5, 2019 - The Board directed staff to reach out to UF and City of Gainesville counterparts, community stakeholders, and advisory boards to discuss opportunities for a cooperative effort on surtax priorities. The County's priorities were solar, conservation lands, greenways and trails, high frequency public transport, innovative housing, and waste infrastructure.

June 27, 2019 - Commissioner Hutchinson moved to refer the Infrastructure Surtax Language on the sheet to staff for review and come back with a preliminary analysis of issues either with the legal issues with the way it is structured and practical issues with the implementation. Addressing the issue of chronic lack of connections to sewer infrastructure and the impacts it has on water quality should be added to the language on the sheet. The preliminary analysis should be brought back within 60 days for the Board's consideration. The motion carried 4-0 with Commissioner Wheeler out of the room.

Fiscal Consideration:

A full cent surtax should generate approximately \$23 million/year.

Background:

In the face of the looming public concerns of climate change and associated extreme weather events, Alachua County desires to become a more resilient and inclusive community. The challenges of creating an adaptive, green infrastructure that can mitigate and adapt to the coming new normal will

require a substantial community investment. Obligations of general fund resources of both Commissions make them less than desirable for such transformative initiatives. However, an infrastructure surtax option would be significant resource for building resiliency into the 21st Century. The infrastructure surtax is a discretionary sales tax of up to one penny as prescribed by Florida Statute [212.055 <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0200-0299/0212/Sections/0212.055.html>](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0200-0299/0212/Sections/0212.055.html).

The surtax must be approved by a referendum at a general election. The County is proposing placing a referendum on the November 2020 ballot for up to a full penny for 20 years. Funds would be collected in 2025 with the sunset of the Wild Spaces Public Spaces ½ cent surtax in 2024. An interlocal agreement or statutory defined formula may be used for the disbursement of funds.

Surtax proceeds may be used for a variety of capital related investments that is government-owned but cannot be use for operations. Alachua County explored several resiliency funding options as part of its November 5, 2019 Special meeting. To date the County would like to further explore utility scale solar photovoltaic systems to offset governmental carbon emissions, extending conservation land purchases, bike trails and greenways construction, innovative and affordable housing, high frequency public transit, and zero-waste facilities and equipment.

Alachua County recognizes that the City of Gainesville's resiliency funding interests may overlap with some outstanding topics noted above but may also have an interest in local food support infrastructure, broadband, gray to green infrastructure transformation and other climate mitigation and adaptation projects.

The County desires to discuss resiliency projects of mutual interest and singular interest with the City and to coordinate their focus and potential community benefit for all.

If agreeable, the County proposes the following timeline with multiple check-in opportunities between the Commissions and the public to November 2020:

Infrastructure Surtax Timeline

- Now -January 2020: Convene stakeholders, build consensus
- February to March 2020: Bring back preliminary report and draft interlocal agreement with define program
- March 2020 Notify OPAGA for statutory performance audit
- April to June: Finalize ballot language
- November 3, 2020 Referendum
- 2021-2024 Project prep and conceptual design
- January 2025 Surtax proceeds available for projects