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2525 Estero Blvd., Fort Myers Beach, Fla. 33931 / [www.fmbgov.com](http://www.fmbgov.com)

## **Town's Fiscal Year 2022 budget adopted on September 16**

**Town of Fort Myers Beach, FL** – The Town Council of Fort Myers Beach held its two regular September meetings a week apart on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> in the evening at 5:01 p.m. The annual required public budget hearings were the main agenda items at each meeting. Florida law requires municipalities to conduct budget hearings in the evening.

At the second public budget hearing on September 16, Town Council adopted the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget, retaining the millage rate at .95. Parking fees were increased from \$3 to \$5 an hour and short term rental registration fees were increased to \$300. These increases will take effect on January 1, 2022. Revenue currently generated by these fees offsets operating costs and helps keep property taxes low.

Proposed uses for revenue generated by these increases include implementing a parking app that communicates open spaces in Town and commercial lots, covering inflation on the Bay Oaks, Bayside Park, and Times Square redevelopment projects, and developing a plan for workforce housing.

The proposed addition to the budget of approximately \$230,000 for a community policing program was not supported by the majority of Town Councilors though it was a topic of much discussion. One addition to the proposed budget at the time of its approval was \$25,000 for security cameras as a first step toward enhancing public safety.

At the September 9 meeting, Town Councilors recognized Jan Fleming and Janeen Paulauskis with the annual Citizen of Distinction Award for their leadership of the community-wide fundraising campaign #WeAreFMB in 2020. Jan and Janeen and their team of volunteers created and sold T-shirts to purchase gift cards for food and distribute them to hospitality workers and others in need because of the impact of the COVID pandemic.

### **In other business on September 9, Town Councilors:**

- Authorized the Town Manager to attempt to negotiate a contract with Wright Construction for proposed improvements at Bayside Park;
- Approved a resolution to review the Town's land development code to limit the size of single family homes built on two or more lots and invoke "zoning in progress" while the code is under review;
- Authorized Town staff to submit a funding request to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for the Estero Island Shore Protection Project, seek additional funding from the Tourist Development Council, and provide local match funds;

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The Town of Fort Myers Beach is on Estero Island off the southwest Florida coast facing the Gulf of Mexico and backed by Estero Bay. Known for white sugar sand and spectacular sunsets and shell finds, the Gulf beach stretches for seven miles. Incorporated since 1995, the Town has a variety of unique parks, recreation, cultural facilities, shops, and restaurants.

- Accepted a \$1,000 donation from the Fort Myers Beach Community Foundation for the pop-up environmental education booth operated by the Marine Resources Task Force;
- Approved sidewalk and utility easements from Estero Bay Hotel Company;
- Authorized an agreement with Softrim, LLC, for Information Technology Services;
- Authorized the Town Manager to renew an annual agreement of \$45,000 with State Lobbyist Ronald L. Book, P.A.;
- Approved four annual contractual employee agreements for environmental services, planning/zoning, building services, and community development administration;
- Agreed to allow: 1) Lee Tran to install a plain screen around the property at 2545/2555 Estero Boulevard that will be used for temporary storage of equipment; 2) A license agreement with the Lee County Sheriff to have a community outreach trailer at 1054 Fifth Street;
- Continued a resolution to the September 16 meeting to update Town Council’s policies and procedures manual and then approved it on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**In other business on September 16, Town Councilors:**

- Authorized the Town Manager to execute final one-year renewals for existing miscellaneous professional services agreements;
- Authorized the Mayor and Town Manager to execute a one-year renewal agreement for legal services with John R. Herin, Jr.;
- Approved variances for pool location and street setbacks at 2842 Seaview Street and 506/508 Carlos Circle (with conditions);
- Continued a special exemption for consumption on premises and video arcade for adults;
- Agreed to schedule a review of a workforce housing proposal created by Councilor Bill Veach.

Topics brought up by Town Councilors at both meetings included the presentation of the final report from the consultants about a plan for safe and wildlife-friendly lighting along Estero Boulevard, the reduction in resident numbers captured in the 2020 Census data, and possible uses of funds from the American Rescue Plan Act for recovery from the impact of the COVID pandemic in 2020.

Topics brought up during public comment included the report from the consultants for safe and wildlife-friendly lighting along Estero Boulevard, community policing, and zoning in progress. U.S. Congressman Byron Donalds attended the September 16 meeting and spoke about water quality and the plan from the Army Corps of Engineers for future releases of water from Lake Okeechobee. Bonita Springs City Councilor Jesse Purdon attended the September 16 meeting to express that community policing has been successful in Bonita Springs.

The next Town Council meeting will be on Monday, Oct. 4 at 9 a.m. at Town Hall, 2525 Estero Boulevard. Agendas and minutes for the meetings can be found on the Town’s website. Live and recorded meetings can be watched on the Town’s YouTube channel.

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