

MAYOR
SHEILA
DeCiccio
CITY of WINTER PARK



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Each year, the city manager presents a proposed balanced budget to the City Commission. That budget was presented to the City Commission on July 8.

There are two major initiatives that could impact future city budgets:

1. Widely discussed has been the State of Florida's Amendment 3 that will be on the November ballot. This amendment would significantly decrease property taxes available to fund city services beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2028.
2. The other lessor known initiative which does not require approval by the voters, is an exercise requiring the City Manager to present, along with the balanced budget, a 90% budget. Basically, it requires showing ways to cut the balanced budget by 10%. While that exercise is not required until next year, city management has implemented it early by asking each department to present how they could reduce their budgets by approximately 10% for FY2028. In total, a 10% reduction to General Fund expenditures would be approximately \$9.5 million.

While this 10% exercise as required by the State in 2028, does not and will not require actual cuts, if Amendment 3 passes, some of these cuts would likely have to be taken to balance the budget with less tax revenue available.

None of the reductions below have been approved yet. Some of the proposed cuts are reasonable cost savings. However, several other proposed cuts would directly affect the services our residents depend on -- such as public safety, infrastructure repairs and maintenance. That is why we are being proactive.

I'm writing this email because I believe you, our Winter Park residents, deserve to see the potential cuts that are being discussed. As always, I'm committed to full transparency.

In the meantime, the full fiscal year 2027 budget proposal can be found at the link below.

Here are a few of the highlights of the 10% exercise:

Fire-Rescue

- **\$1.2 million** – Closing one fire engine company which provides fire and ambulance services.
- **\$200,000** – Freeze the two firefighter positions which are currently vacant

Police

- **\$1.5 million** – Eliminate four detective positions, two HART officers who focus on the homeless, one traffic officer and one community service officer. This will decrease services and increase response times.
- **\$300,000** – Eliminate the body-worn camera program and eliminate the live crime center.
- **\$125,000** – Reduce police services at community events, decrease lake patrols and boating-law enforcement, and reduce community outreach. This would require a reduction in events due to the police cuts.

Parks and Recreation

- **\$455,000** – Eliminate the tree specialist position, reduce new tree plantings and residential tree permitting, and cancel the purchase of a watering truck
- **\$330,000** – Reduce maintenance at cemeteries, the Events Center, and the Library
- **\$100,000** – Reduce operating hours November through March of Cady Way Pool and Community Center Pool
- **\$100,000 – 150,000** – Eliminate a park ranger and parks maintenance position

Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement

- **\$100,000** – Eliminate the Historic Preservation Grant Program and plaques for those who put their home on the Winter Park Historic Registry
- **\$75,000** – Eliminate one Code Enforcement Officer which would decrease response times for our residents' concerns
- **Communications**
- **\$72,000** – Stop printing and mailing the Winter Park Update newsletter and monthly utility bill inserts. In the most recent resident survey, respondents indicated they like the hard copy communications from the city
- **\$12,000** – Eliminate the annual board appreciation event for our 150+ volunteer advisory board members

Information Technology and Human Resources

- **\$118,000** – Eliminate the GIS Analyst position and part-time administrator.
- **\$28,400** – Eliminate online performance reviews, photo badges, and professional development. The performance review processes would become manual.

Winter Park Library

- **\$210,000** – Close the library every Monday

Natural Resources and Sustainability

- **\$300,000** – Reduce residential waste collection to once per week.
- **\$21,000** – Reduce community programs and compliance awareness initiatives

City-wide Changes

- **\$1.2 million** – Add a credit-card processing fee for residents who pay by credit card
- **\$243,000** – Reduce funding to outside organizations such as the Winter Park History Museum, the Albin Polasek Museum & Sculpture Gardens, Mead Botanical Garden, etc.

What Happens Next?

As you can see, getting to a budget cut of 10% would not be painless. It could mean fewer police officers and detectives, longer emergency response times, reduced park maintenance, one-day a week trash collection, and fewer community programs.

While the 10% reduction exercise does not require any cuts, if Amendment 3 passes, some of these cuts above would be on the table. By our estimates, Amendment 3 would require budget cuts of \$3.4 million in FY2028 and in \$6.7 million FY2029.

The City Commission will discuss these proposals at its budget work session on Thursday, August 27. We will review each option carefully, consider City management recommendations, and listen to our residents before making our decisions.

Florida voters will decide in November whether the proposed tax changes move forward. Before casting that vote, every resident deserves to understand the choices involved.

The *Wall Street Journal*, The Florida Estimating Conference which is comprised of nonpartisan economists, the Florida Tax Foundation and the three ratings agencies Moody, Fitch, and Standard & Poor's all oppose Amendment 3. In the June 10th issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, their Editorial Board stated:

"So, it's a shame that Gov. Ron DeSantis is using his final months in office to push a poorly designed measure on the November ballot..."

Commissioner Constantine said, **"Whenever you reduce livability...the first thing that goes down is your property value. Everything they say they want to do, this is the antithesis of that."**

I will continue to share information as this process moves forward. I believe it's important to discuss the consequences of this legislation before the vote, not after. To view the Proposed FY2027 budget in its entirety, please access:

<https://cityofwinterpark.org/docs/departments/finance/budget/proposed-budget-2027.pdf>

Warmly,

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Sheila DeCiccio

Mayor, City of Winter Park

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P.S. As this was going to print, the Police and Fire Unions and the Florida Sheriff's Association are the latest groups to oppose the November ballot measure to roll back property taxes.

This newsletter is written by Winter Park Mayor Sheila DeCiccio to inform her constituents.
The views expressed are her own and are not intended to represent the entire WP Commission.

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