

**CITY OF PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA
CITY COUNCIL BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2021, 5:01 P.M.**

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Carey, Cummings, Matthews, Miller, Prafke

CITY EMPLOYEES PRESENT: Kristin Simeone, Finance; Rick Keeney, Public Works; Charles Pavlos, Utilities; Jeff Payne, Human Resources; Joan LeBeau, Urban Design; Pamela Davis, Police; Ray Briggs, Fire; City Manager Murray; City Attorney Levin; Deputy Clerk Welch

Mayor Matthews called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. She then reviewed the procedures for public comment.

BUDGET PUBLIC HEARINGS

A Resolution adopting a final millage rate for the levying of ad valorem taxes for the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, for fiscal year 2021/2022.

Mayor Matthews read the resolution by title. She announced the calculated rollback rate for the City was 3.3203 mills, adding the proposed millage rate was 3.9500 mills, which was 18.97% higher than the calculated rollback rate.

Ms. Kristin Simeone, Finance Director, explained the FY 2021 General Fund Ad Valorem tax revenue increase provided for Information Technology improvements, better matched current revenues with current expenditures, would ensure revenue sufficiency for the 5-year recommended plan including service level enhancements, funded the City's paving and drainage improvement programs as well as emergency vehicles and fleet equipment replacements and improved the General Fund Operating Reserve.

Mr. John Shattuck expressed concern regarding the vitriol surrounding the budget discussions, opining the proposed tax rate was actually too low. He commented favorably regarding staff, expressing concern they would leave the City if wages did not keep up with inflation. He concluded by recommending residents learn more about the issues.

Mr. Jerry Riseley suggested the budget could be further optimized and costs could be reduced through good management.

Mr. Derek Rooney spoke in favor of increasing the millage rate and adopting a budget which would support the City into the future.

Mr. Lindsay Harrington stated it was inevitable taxes would increase in the coming years; however, he suggested increases should be done in smaller increments than was proposed.

Mayor Matthews called three times for further public comment.

Councilmember Prafke **MOVED** to close the public hearing, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Cummings.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

Councilmember Prafke pointed out budget discussions had been occurring since January 2021, opining in retrospect, the millage rate should have been increased years ago. She stated City services would suffer if the millage rate was not increased, adding it was necessary to balance the budget.

Councilmember Carey stated input regarding alternatives and areas where cuts could be made should have been provided during budget discussions. She stated incremental increases would have needed implementation 5 years ago in order to sufficiently fund the City.

Mayor Matthews concurred with Councilmembers Prafke and Carey, stressing there had been no millage rate increase for six years. She explained City Manager Murray had been asked to address the City's long-term financial sustainability and viability.

Councilmember Miller opined the proposed increase was necessary as an incremental increase would not sufficiently fund City operations into the future.

Mayor Matthews **CALLED** the question.

Councilmember Prafke **MOVED** approval of the resolution adopting a final millage rate of 3.9500 mills for FY 2021/2022, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Carey.

VOTING AYE: Carey, Matthews, Miller, Prafke.

VOTING NAY: Cummings.

MOTION CARRIED.

An emergency ordinance of the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, adopting a budget for Fiscal Year 2021/2022; making appropriations; providing for conflict and severability; and providing an effective date.

Mayor Matthews read the ordinance by title.

Ms. Simeone stated the emergency ordinance adopted the final budget for FY 2021/2022 which constituted appropriations and revenue estimates in the amount of \$161,959,899, noting net of interfund eliminations, the amount was \$135,853,172.

Ms. Karen Turnbull objected to the canal maintenance fee amount assessed, opining the amount assessed exceeded the value of the special benefit to her property. She contended the assessed fee was not proportional to the benefit received among properties.

Mayor Matthews called three times for public comment.

Councilmember Prafke **MOVED** to close the public hearing, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Cummings.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

Councilmember Cummings **MOVED** approval of the emergency ordinance adopting a final budget for FY 2021/2022, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Prafke.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

Mayor

Deputy Clerk