

Media Release



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HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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For More Information:

Marc Orlando
Town Manager
Town of Bluffton
20 Bridge Street
Bluffton, South Carolina 29910
(Office) 843.706-4505
(Facebook) Town of Bluffton Government

Town Council Approves FY2018 Budget, Continues Town Council's Strategic Plan, Advances Robust Capital Improvement Projects Program

Bluffton's Town Council approved the second reading and adopted the Town's Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 consolidated budget during the June 13 Town Council meeting. State law requires all municipalities to adopt a balanced budget ordinance before July 1.

The proposed budget, totaling \$36,759,268, moves the Town forward through program enhancements and a robust capital projects schedule.

The proposed budget reduces the tax liability to property owners by two mills, from 42.35 to 40.35, yields a revenue reduction of \$353,170 to for FY 2018 before applying the effect of the Town's growth to the projected property tax revenue.

"I am proud this budget represents lean government principles as Town Council and staff strive to be financially efficient while providing enhanced services, programs and amenities to our residents," Town Manager Marc Orlando said. "It is rare to be able to give residents a mill reduction, provide a 14% decrease in our budget compared to last year while continually serving our residents and business owners. This is a testament to the Town's financial well-being."

Community development and beautification programs are prominent features of the proposed budget. The FY 2018 Affordable Housing Committee Work Plan is funded in the amount of \$425,000 and will assist income-qualified residents with minor home repairs as well as property maintenance, to include abatement of unsafe structures, property clean-up and septic repair. The Beautification Committee Work Plan includes funds for tree plantings, an annual Arbor Day event and seasonal plantings in the Adopt a Planter Program.

The proposed budget invests in civic space, Town facilities and environmental initiatives. Approximately \$13 million of capital projects are in the FY 2018 proposed budget. These projects include improved safety and walkability of high-traffic pedestrian areas; stormwater initiatives to support the May River Watershed Action Plan; development of recently purchased Historic District property to add more passive park space and increased parking; improving the Calhoun Street Dock to support regional tourism; further improvements to Oyster Factory Park; and renovation of Town Hall.

The capital improvement program fund budget invests in developing Historic District properties recently acquired by the Town. The properties of 68 Boundary Street and 111 Calhoun Street, and the pending acquisition of 184 Bluffton Road will result in development of passive park space and additional parking spaces within close proximity to popular retail establishments and restaurants.

Media Release



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Highlights of the FY2018/CIP Program Include:

- May River Road Streetscape Project
 - Additional parking, lighting, sidewalks and stormwater infrastructure from Dollar General to Parker's Gas Station on May River Road. This project is in progress, expected to be complete by end of calendar year 2017.
- Land Acquisition (184 Bluffton Road/Anticipated Closing Fall-2017)
 - Town is scheduled to purchase 184 Bluffton Road, where currently CrossFit 843 resides. The Town plans to renovate the property and provide additional parking for the Historic District.
- May River Watershed Action Plan Implementation
 - Continue to implement the May River Watershed Action Plan to enhance the health of the May River.
- Buckwalter Place Multi-County Commerce Park Improvements
 - Implement the partnership between the Town and Southeastern Development Associates which provides for a public park, a permanent home for the Don Ryan Center for Innovation, road/sewer infrastructure and job/company-ready sites for prospective companies at Buckwalter Place.
- Buck Island –Simmonsville Sewer Phase 5
 - Continue to implement sewer infrastructure to the Buck Island-Simmonsville community.
- Buck Island-Simmonsville Sidewalks & Lighting
 - In concert with the sewer project, also continue to install sidewalks and lighting to the Buck Island-Simmonsville community.
- Jason-Able Streets Neighborhood Sewer
 - Implement sewer infrastructure/connection to the neighborhood of Jason and Able Streets.
- Community Safety Cameras Phase 3
 - Install more public safety cameras.
- Goethe-Shults Neighborhood Improvements Phase 1
 - Install sidewalks, replace overhead lighting and add new street lighting.
- Historic District Lighting, Signage, Parking & Streetscape Enhancements
 - Install additional street lighting, signage, parking and street enhancements in Historic District to improve pedestrian safety and more parking.
- Town Hall Renovations
 - Renovate and modernize Town Hall's infrastructure, architecture and functionality.
- Dr. Mellichamp Drive Streetscape
 - Enhance parking capacity in the Dr. Mellichamp Drive commerce area in conjunction with adding parking at the adjacent M.C. Riley Sports Complex.
- Dog Park
 - Construct a public dog park.
- Don Ryan Center for Innovation Upfit
 - Upfit the Don Ryan Center for Innovation's new permanent home at Buckwalter Place.
- Sewer Connection Program
 - Connect Bluffton homes within 300' of sanitary sewer lines in an effort to remove septic systems from the May River watershed.

Media Release



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- 68 Boundary Renovations
 - Provide for a public park and additional parking in the Historic District at 68 Boundary Street.
- Wright Family Property Renovations (111 Calhoun Street)
 - The Town and County bought this riverfront property to provide for a public park with access to the May River.
- Regional Dock and Public Riverfront Access Improvements (Calhoun Street Dock)
 - Enhance the Calhoun Street dock to provide for regional access to boats.

“The Town has an ambitious schedule of capital improvement projects this fiscal year,” Mayor Lisa Sulka said. “The Town is continually striving to provide more parking, sidewalks and lighting so as Bluffton grows, we continue to be a walkable town. I am also especially proud of the projects which will enhance the overall quality of life for our residents with more open spaces and a riverfront public park.”