

Media Release



bluffton
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

May 16, 2018

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 First Reading of FY2019 Consolidated Budget

Bluffton Town Council approved the first reading of the Town's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 consolidated budget during the May 8 Town Council meeting. State law requires all municipalities to adopt a balanced budget ordinance before July 1. The new fiscal year begins July 1.

The proposed consolidated budget is comprised of four different funds which include General Fund, Stormwater Fund, Capital Improvements Program Fund and Debt Service Fund. The proposed FY 2019 consolidated budget totals \$32,824,230 and is structured to move the Town forward through program enhancements to include improved delivery of services and a robust capital projects schedule.

The Town is hosting two public workshops, May 16 and May 21 to discuss budget details. Both meetings will be held at 6 p.m. at the Rotary Community Center. The May 16 meeting will discuss the General Fund, Debt Service Fund and the Stormwater Fund and the May 21 meeting will discuss the details of the Capital Improvements Program Fund.

The proposed budget reduces the property tax millage by nearly two mills, from 40.35 to 38.50. Due to the continued growth in our community, both residential and commercial investments, the Town has a strong financial position. In addition, every five years, counties in South Carolina appraise real property to "true up" the market values of all parcels in the jurisdiction. This reassessment is not intended to raise taxes, but to distribute them more fairly. The Town saw an overall increase in market values, therefore a "rollback" of the millage was necessary to keep property taxes consistent. As a result, the proposed budget reduces the property tax millage. For a house appraised at \$270,000, the Town tax bill is about \$500 which includes Town of Bluffton operations, debt and stormwater fee.

"I am proud of how efficiently the Town operates year after year," Town Manager Marc Orlando said. "It is rare that a municipality can improve services, programs and amenities for its residents without an increase in the taxation rate. This is truly a testament to the Town's financial strength which can be attributed to a robust business community and well-managed population growth."

Programs for affordable housing, beautification, May River Watershed Action Plan and capital improvements are prominent features of the proposed budget. The FY 2019 Affordable Housing

Media Release



bluffton
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Committee Work Plan is funded in the amount of \$741,700 and will among other initiatives, 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 \$9 million of capital projects are in the FY 2019 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; preservation design of the historic Squire Pope Carriage House, further improvements to Oyster Factory Park; and completion of Town Hall renovation.

The capital improvement program fund budget invests in developing Historic District properties acquired by the Town. The properties of 68 Boundary Street, which is adjacent to DuBois Park, and 111 Calhoun Street, which is across from Church of Cross, and 184 Bluffton Road, where Crossfit 843 was formerly located, will result in development of passive park space and additional parking spaces within close proximity to popular retail establishments and restaurants.

Highlights of the FY2019/CIP Program Include:

- **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 –Simmons ville Sewer Phase 5**
 - Continue to implement sewer infrastructure to the Buck Island-Simmons ville community.
- **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.
- **Buck Island-Simmons ville Sidewalks & Lighting**
 - In concert with the sewer project, also continue to install sidewalks and lighting to the Buck Island-Simmons ville community.

Media Release



bluffton
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

- Oyster Factory Park
 - Further improvements to dock, drainage and parking lot area.
- 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.
- Regional Dock and Public Riverfront Access Improvements (Calhoun Street Dock)
 - Enhance the Calhoun Street dock to provide for regional access to boats.
- 68 Boundary Renovations
 - Provide for a public park and additional parking in the Historic District at 68 Boundary Street.
- 184 Bluffton Road
 - This town-owned property, which was formerly Crossfit 843, will provide for additional parking and other amenities.
- 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. This project includes the renovation design of the Squire Pope Carriage House this fiscal year.
- Town Hall Renovations
 - Renovate and modernize Town Hall's infrastructure, architecture and functionality.
- Community Safety Cameras Phase 4
 - Install more public safety cameras.

"The Town begins the new fiscal year in a healthy financial position," Mayor Lisa Sulka said. "It is a goal of Town Council to continue to implement projects and programs which improve the quality of life for our residents. This budget is intimately connected to our Strategic Plan which drives Town Council's commitment to provide more parking, sidewalks and lighting as we maintain a small-town community feel as we continue to grow."