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AVENTURA *update*

VOLUME 10 | NUMBER 3 | WINTER 2007

A Newsletter Designed to Inform the Residents of Aventura

A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City of Aventura's newsletter represents the City Commission's continued commitment to keep the community updated on important issues, including city government and services. This newsletter is published on a quarterly basis and your comments and suggestions are welcome.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to join with our community to make Aventura a city of the highest quality and a City of Excellence. We do this by providing RESPONSIVE, COST EFFECTIVE and INNOVATIVE local government services.

www.cityofaventura.com



The City of Aventura Reduces Tax Rate by 23%

Recently the City Commission adopted the budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2007. The budget included a reduction in the City's property tax rate based on the implementation of the state imposed property tax reform from 2.2270 to 1.7261. This represents a 23% reduction in the City's tax rate. The City's tax rate is the lowest in the County. This resulted in a \$238 savings on the City's portion of the tax bill for a home assessed at \$500,000 with a homestead exemption. The City's portion of the total property tax bill presents only 10% of the total. The other large portions represent the County and School Board.

Due to the property tax reform legislation adopted by the State Legislature in special session and its impact on the City's revenue structure, the process to prepare this budget was more complex than in the past and required difficult decisions. Every effort was made to maintain our quality municipal services, in particular public safety services, park availability hours and our signature beautification efforts.

The City lost \$3 million in property revenues compared to the previous method. All user

fees were reviewed to ensure that revenues offset the cost of the program or service and to reduce the subsidy from the General Fund. This process generated \$100,000 in additional user fees and charges for services. Employee travel expenditure and attendance at seminars and conferences were reduced by 30%. Many special event programs provided to the community were eliminated or reduced. The hurricane/storm reserve account of \$500,000 was eliminated. Only essential capital equipment and technology replacements or purchases are funded from the General Fund. Unfortunately, a civilian position in the Police Department was eliminated from the budget. The budget does not include any expansion or additional areas of service except for the opening of new Waterways Park in March.

The revenue reductions required by the property tax reforms caused the City Commission and City Administration to re-examine the original concept of constructing a \$10 million Performing Arts Center. Due to the uncertainty associated with future revenues and to reduce any impact on the operating budget, the project has been re-evaluated and reduced to coincide with available funding amounts.

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NEW MIAMI GARDENS DRIVE EXTENSION OPENED



This past November, the Aventura City Commission and Miami – Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman dedicated the recently opened Miami Gardens Drive Road Extension project. The four lane \$2.2 million extension, connecting Biscayne Boulevard east to NE 18th Street was jointly funded by the City, county and the Merco Group, which is building the adjacent Terzetto development. The project was completed on time and within budget.

Miami – Dade County funded the majority of the project at almost \$2 million and the Merco Group was responsible for the roadway directly in front of its development as a City site plan requirement.

The quarter mile extension was designed as part of the City’s efforts to improve traffic flow in the southern portion of the City and ease congestion on Williams Island Boulevard and NE 185th Street.

In addition, as part of the City’s efforts to address traffic flow concerns, the Miami-Dade Public Works Department is installing a new traffic signal at the intersection of NE 29th Avenue and 188th Street. 🚦

Continued from cover

Due to privatizing and outsourcing many City services over the years, completing \$100 million in capital projects since 1996 and maintaining prudent reserve funds, the City has stabilized costs and is in a better position than most to weather the revenue reductions mandated by the property tax reforms. However, additional reductions required by property tax reform movements will impact our ability to maintain current service levels and programs provided to the community.

The total proposed budget for 2007/08 is \$49,291,276. This is \$11,147,945 or 18.4% less compared to the prior year. The decrease is attributed to completing major capital projects and reducing operating expenses.

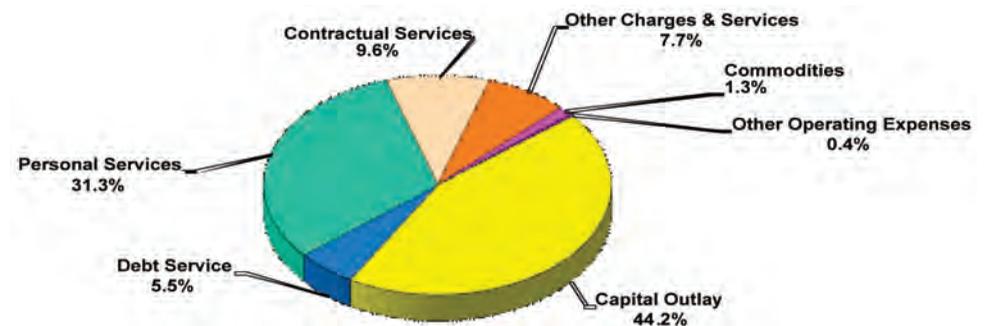
Some of the major points emphasized, in the proposed budget, are as follows:

- For the twelfth year, no property tax increase. Adopts the state imposed roll back millage rate of 1.7261.
- The General Fund operating costs were reduced by 4% without reducing current service levels including police to respond to property tax revenue reductions.
- Provides funding to staff and operate new Waterways Park and supervision of the new restrooms at Veterans Park. All other park

staffing levels and hours were maintained.

- Funds construction of new Waterways Dog Park, Veterans Park restroom facilities and Country Club Drive tennis court renovation, which will provide more recreational and open space opportunities in the community.
- Includes funds to construct traffic flow intersection improvements along Biscayne Boulevard and expand the Traffic Video Monitoring Program to NE 213th Street and Country Club Drive at a cost of \$2,387,000.
- Provides for \$4,951,168 worth of capital improvements. The City’s infrastructure needs are addressed through a broad mix of capital Improvement projects, which will enhance the City’s quality of life, and the attractiveness of the City.
- Continues to implement technology enhancements that develop our “Electronic Government” to allow the public to interact more easily and conveniently with the City and to automate City operations.
- Continues contracting most maintenance functions, engineering, plan review and inspection services to the private sector.
- Funds police equipment needs from laptop computers to new police vehicles in the amount of \$979,068.
- Includes \$360,000 to upgrade the drainage system along NE 190th Street. 🚧

CATEGORY SUMMARY BY PERCENTAGE



CATEGORY SUMMARY

CATEGORY	PROPOSED AMOUNT	% OF BUDGET
Personal Services	\$14,422,926	31.3%
Contractual Services	4,747,297	9.6%
Other Charges & Services	3,790,238	7.7%
Commodities	631,450	1.3%
Other Operating Expenses	195,335	0.4%
Capital Outlay	21,735,761	44.2%
Debt Service	2,718,279	5.5%
TOTALS	\$49,291,276	100.0%

January 29, 2008 Special Election

On January 29, 2008 voters throughout the state will be asked to decide to change the State Constitution by adopting four proposals aimed at reducing property taxes for 2008/09 tax year.

The following is a summary of the Constitutional Amendments:

DOUBLING THE HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

- Creates an additional homestead exemption worth \$25,000, applied to home value above \$50,000.
- This exemption will not apply to school tax levies.

FULL PORTABILITY

- Allows homeowners to transfer their Save Our Homes (SOH) benefit to a new homestead anywhere in Florida within 2 years of leaving their former homesteads.
- Individuals that sold their homes in 2007 can transfer their SOH benefit to a new homestead if they establish the new homestead by January 1, 2009.
- If “upsizing” to a home of equal or greater just value, the homestead owner can transfer 100% of the SOH benefit to the new homestead, up to a \$500,000 transferred benefit.
- If “downsizing” to a home with a lower just value, the homestead owner can transfer a SOH benefit that protects the same percentage of value as it did the former homestead, up to a \$500,000 benefit.
- The transferred SOH benefit will apply to all taxes, including school taxes.

PROVIDES AN ASSESSMENT GROWTH LIMITATION OF 10% FOR ALL NON-HOMESTEAD PROPERTIES

- This assessment limitation does not apply to school tax levies.
- The assessment limitation will expire in 10 years. At that time voters will decide whether or not to reauthorize it.
- Residential properties of nine units or less will surrender accumulated protections at the change of ownership or control, as defined by general law.
- For all other properties (i.e. residential properties of ten or more units and business properties), the Legislature must define by general law how the property will surrender protections when there is a “qualifying improvement” to the property. The Legislature may define by general law how the property will surrender the accumulated protections at a change of ownership or control.

CREATES A TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY EXEMPTION OF \$25,000

- This exemption applies to all tax levies.

The impact to the average property owner of these relief proposals will be less than \$250 annually. It is important to note that it is estimated that if the Amendments pass in January, the City of Aventura would lose between \$700,000 to \$1,000,000 in property tax revenues from its budget. This will again require the City to review its budget for possible reductions in services to the community.



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AVENTURA UPDATE



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Teri Holzberg ■ Billy Joel

Michael Stern ■ Luz Urbáez-Weinberg

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CITY CLERK Teresa M. Soroka, MMC

CITY ATTORNEY

Weiss Serota Helfman
Pastoriza Cole & Boniske

EDITOR Rosie Marquez

MYAVENTURA



By now, you've all become familiar with CitySpeak, our free email subscription service. We've raised the bar and are pleased to announce the launch of MyAventura. It's a central place to get 24/7 customer service online from the comfort of your home or office. Not only can you sign up to get news and information, but you'll also be able to request services and search for answers to common questions instantly. Watch for updates throughout the City on the TV, radio and web site. 📺

ACES Community Care Outreach Program Wins National Promising Practices Character Education Award



Aventura City of Excellence School (ACES) earned a National Promising Practices Character Education Award receiving recognition for its Community Care Outreach Program, which provides students with opportunities for moral action.

The ACES "Community Care Outreach Program" ties the Living Values Character Education Program into the curriculum by providing ACES students with a framework to "Live their Values" and demonstrate moral action through teamwork, responsibility, cooperation, and shared goals. Infused with a sense of pride and social responsibility, ACES students, families and staff members unite to demonstrate skills that make a "difference at ACES and in the world."

Principal, Julie Alm said, "We are very proud of ACES students' contribution to our community. ACES raised and donated over \$40,000 to charities worldwide. ACES "Whole Child" approach supports learning by placing students at the center of their own learning experience. Our students discover at a very young age the importance of being socially responsible, caring and contributing citizens. ACES excels in student achievement, commu-

nity involvement and innovative practices, while caring for our families, our community and our students' individual needs."

ACES participates with the City of Aventura in Founder's Day Weekend Activities, International Peace Day, family fun days, the Dare Program, Holiday Toy Drive and the Arbor Day Celebration. Guests from the community are invited to speak at ACES assemblies for special occasions such as: the Holocaust Remembrance Day, African American History Month, Women's History Month, Law Day and Career Day. ACES students are often the catalyst for the school's charitable projects. Students generate fundraising ideas focusing on giving back to their community and the world. As part of this program, funds were raised for a variety of local, national and international charities such as: Homeless Shelters, Diabetics in Africa, Heart Disease, Rainforest Preservation, Cystic Fibrosis, Cancer Research and The Read to Feed Program, which collects money from sponsors for books that students read, to purchase animals, offering economic independence to poor families in the world.



ACES Special Events Director, Leslie Loewenthal leads the Community Care Outreach Program. Leslie said, "ACES is a very unique place. The City of Aventura and ACES administration have created a prototype of best practices in quality education." 📺

Special Events: Past and Upcoming



DRANOFF INTERNATIONAL TWO PIANO CONCERT COMPETITION

The City of Aventura proudly presented an evening of classical music on Sunday, December 9, 2007 at the Aventura Government Center. Over 100 Residents enjoyed the classical music at the “Concert of Lights” featuring the Dranoff International Two Piano with Duo Scarbo and Genova & Dimitrov Duo.

VETERANS DAY

The City of Aventura saluted America’s veterans at a formal ceremony Sunday, November 11, 2007 at the Aventura Government Center. The City remembered and recognized all the brave men and women who have served in the armed forces in the just cause of world peace. 162 residents joined the City Officials, community leaders, veterans, heroes and neighbors in this beautiful tribute to our veterans.

FOUNDERS DAY

November 11, 2007 – A great time was had by all who attended Founders Day at Founders Park. There was continuous live music throughout the day along with great family fun which included a giant inflatable

slide, a rock climbing wall, entertainment including the annual Aventura Star Competition and “What’s the Deal” game show; interactive games; arts and crafts projects; Purple People face painters; Toddler Town including a toddler bounce house, interactive crawlers and puppet shows, comedy show, sidewalk circus, games and more. Over 2,500 residents and their guests enjoyed the family fun day activities.

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AVENTURA EXPRESS SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE



Did you know that over 13,000 passengers a month have ridden the Aventura Express Shuttle Bus service? We have five color coded routes that all meet at the Aventura Mall which can take you to any Miami-Dade or Broward County Bus route as well. This free air conditioned mini bus service stops at most major retail areas, health care providers, grocery stores, drug stores and operates Monday through Saturday.

The Blue Route serves the northern portion of the City; the Red and Green routes serve the areas between the Lehman Causeway and NE 207 Street, and the Purple and Yellow Routes serve the southern area of Aventura south of the Lehman Causeway.

The Blue, Red, Green and Purple routes start at 7:45 AM with the Yellow route starting at 8:45 AM. All routes run through 6:30 PM Monday through Friday. Saturday evening service runs until 9:30 PM with two Express routes that stop throughout the City. Please visit the City website at www.cityofaventura.com for the latest schedules and download a route map, or give us a call and we will mail one out to you right away. Our Aventura Express Hotline is 305-932-1BUS (1287) and our email address is express@cityofaventura.com.



The City of Aventura is proud to Go Green with the following initiatives that help save energy and conserve precious natural resources to reduce our impact on climate change.

WATER CONSERVATION:

■ Irrigation controllers are set to current water restrictions and are manually shut off when irrigation is not needed. All controllers and valves are inspected throughout each month to minimize water loss from breaks in valves and main lines.

ENERGY CONSERVATION:

■ Motion sensors have been installed in restrooms at the Government Center, Community Recreation Center and Founders Park to activate lights when the door is opened and turn off after 15 minutes if no one else enters the room.

■ All lighting at the City uses energy efficient light bulbs. Automatic timers for holiday lighting have been set to turn off at 1AM, saving over 200 hours of usage during the holiday season.

■ Air conditioning systems at the Community Recreation Center and ACES have been set to a higher temperature during non-use hours.

■ Two Hybrid vehicles are scheduled to be delivered in January, 2008 and put into service replacing current gasoline-powered City vehicles.

■ The City is participating in the FPL Business Energy Service program which provides tips and guides for various energy-saving programs offered by FPL. ☺

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AVENTURA STAR COMPETITION FINALS

The 5th annual Aventura Star Competition Finals took place at Founders Day. Acts ranging from singing to dancing and gymnastics graced the stage at Founders Park. All finalists were recognized for their participation.

CULTURAL ARTS, THEATER AND LEISURE PROGRAM

Registration for the current Cultural Arts, Theater and Leisure Program session is still open for exciting upcoming events. Visit www.cityofaventura.com to register online or register in person at the Aventura Community Recreation Center, 3375 NE 188 Street. Registration is on a first come first serve basis. Call 305-466-3883 for more information regarding availability. Winter session registration will begin on January 14, 2008.

YOUTH ATHLETICS

September 15 – November 3: Youth Flag Football League had 150 children participating in three age divisions. All participants had a great time, and learned valuable skills and teamwork lessons every week. We look forward to adding a girls league next season.

November 5, 2007 – January 17, 2008: The City's Youth Basketball League had 129 children participating in three age divisions. This

year we extended the league to age 14. The basketball participants are having a great season and learning many new skills and making new friends. Next year we look forward to adding a girls basketball league.

November 26, 2007 – March 29, 2008: Girls Soccer League is off to a tremendous start. There are 136 girls registered in three age divisions. This year we extended the girls soccer season to give the girls some extra playing time to learn more of the fundamentals of soccer and teamwork. This year we have also extended all age groups to include 14 year olds.

Please join us for the upcoming 2008 Youth Athletics Programs which includes: Boys and Girls Soccer, T-Ball/Softball and Flag Football. ☺



Aventura Police Wins First Place in Technology

The Aventura Police Department has always shown pride in their ability to stay on the forefront of technology and the use of those tools to keep our community safe. Recently, the Police Department was recognized by FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) and NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) during the annual Law Enforcement Challenge held in Orlando.

The Police Department won first place in the "Technology" division in the statewide competition. The technology award "recognizes notable efforts in addressing traffic safety concerns using new or innovative technology." Our use of technology includes laptops, printers, handheld PDA units, software, electronic message boards, and our newest addition, the Traffic Video Monitoring System. The Aventura Police Department received a trophy and two new speed radars for their participation.

The Florida Law Enforcement Challenge is an annual competition among agencies and organizations that implement new and inno-



vative programs dealing with occupant protection, traffic enforcement and public education. Agencies are judged on the policies, training, public education, enforcement, innovation and effectiveness of their programs. Police Department and Sheriffs Offices are judged separately, each against agencies of similar size. 📍

City of Aventura Police Department & Code Compliance Work Together with Property Owners for Safe Environment

Police Officer Chris Goranitis and Code Compliance Officer Joseph Campodonico have been working together with owners of properties in the Hospital Triangle, west of Biscayne Boulevard between NE 206 Street and NE 214 Terrace, to clean their properties. This area of the City has many older single family homes and has continuing problems with illegal dumping on roadsides, and homes in disrepair. Police Officer Goranitis and Code Compliance Officer Campodonico have worked with property owners to have overgrown shrubbery trimmed, arrange for pickup of items dumped on the side of the roads, repair buildings and remove abandoned vehicles. To date, they have been successful in cleaning 8 residential properties, 1 commercial property and have removed over 20 abandoned vehicles from various areas of the triangle – approximately 60% of their targeted cleanup. Their success means a safer and healthier environment for residents and businesses of this area. 📍

City Commission Adopts Red Light Camera Enforcement Program

Recently the City Commission adopted a Dangerous Intersection Safety Ordinance to address this important traffic safety problem. The purpose of the Ordinance is to authorize the use of unmanned cameras/monitoring system to promote compliance with red light signal directives and to adopt a civil enforcement system for red light signal violations. This program will also supplement law enforcement personnel in the enforcement of red light signal violations and shall not prohibit law enforcement officers from issuing a citation for a red light signal violation in accordance with other routine statutory traffic enforcement techniques. Notices of infractions issued pursuant to this article shall be addressed using the City's own Special Masters process of the City Code and not through uniform traffic citations or county courts.

The cameras are scheduled for installation in the spring of 2008. For the first ninety (90) days of the existence of the Ordinance, unless the driver of a vehicle received a citation from a police officer at the time of a red zone infraction in accordance with routine traffic enforcement techniques, the vehicle owner shall receive a warning in the form of a courtesy notice of the violation.

The vendor awarded the contract by the City will provide the Police Department recorded images of drivers who committed a red light infraction. The Traffic Control Infraction Review Officer designated by the Police Chief will review all recorded images prior to the issuance of a notice to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the recorded images. Once the Traffic Control Infraction Review Officer has verified the accuracy of

the recorded images he or she shall complete a report, and a notice shall be sent to the vehicle owner at the address on record with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or the address on record with the appropriate agency having such information in another state. The civil penalty is \$125 for the first offense, \$250 for the second offense and \$500 for each additional offense

An individual who was issued a violation would have the opportunity to file an appeal before the City's Code Enforcement Special Master in accordance with the procedure outlined in the Ordinance. 📍

CITY COMMISSION MEETINGS

Commission Meetings are held
at 6:00 pm:

Aventura Government Center
Commission Chambers
19200 West Country Club Drive

**Next Meeting,
January 8, 2008 at 6pm**

For information on upcoming
Commission meetings and work-
shops and to confirm all meeting
dates, times and locations,
please contact the City Clerk's
Office at (305) 466-8901.

Watch for These Upcoming Events!



- January 14 Trips and Tour and class registration
- February 10 Sweetheart Piano Concert
- March 8 SplashPad opens for spring
- March 31 – April 4, 2008 Spring Camp
- April 18, 2008 Arbor Day

For event details, visit www.cityofaventura.com



AVENTURA *update*

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