2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

THE FOLLOWING LEGISLATIVE MATTERS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE CITY OF STUART CITY COMMISSION AS THE MOST URGENT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE CITY.

WE THANK THE MARTIN COUNTY DELEGATION FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION.

APPROPRIATION REQUEST:

ALTERNATIVE WATER SUPPLY PROJECT - $16 MILLION

Background: The City of Stuart owns and operates a water treatment plant (WTP), utilizing a lime-softening system with a permitted treatment capacity of 6 million gallons per day (mgd). The City currently treats raw water from the surficial aquifer system (SAS), which is threatened with pollution from various sources including local runoff, saltwater intrusion, and manmade synthetic and organic chemicals and compounds from historical industries. Much of this pollution is out of the scope of control of the City and would be impractical to mitigate directly. Due to these increasing threats to the existing water supply and potential for more stringent future drinking water regulations, the City needs to diversify its supply options by investing in the Floridian Aquifer System (FAS) as an alternate water supply (AWS). The City's Public Works Department, in collaboration with its consultants, has created a plan for an AWS which includes a hybrid of Reverse Osmosis, Ion-Exchange, and utilization of the FAS. The plan includes variability for capacity expansion well into the future, while providing the best modern water treatment technology for users.

The City of Stuart REQUESTS state assistance in the form of non-recurring appropriations phased over multiple years for its Alternative Water Supply Project totaling more than $16 million in capital costs.

POLICY PRIORITIES:

1. **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**
   - **Septic to Sewer Conversions**
   - **Alternative Water Supply**
   - **Global Climate Change**

Background: Although the City of Stuart has spent two decades prioritizing environmental awareness and stewardship through local water quality and sustainability projects and programs, local resources are not sufficient in managing complex, regional, state, national, and global environmental issues. In order to curb the harmful impacts of freshwater discharging into the Saint Lucie River, state resources and funding is desperately needed for capital projects designed to retain and treat billions of gallons of freshwater, from wherever it may originate. These resources are also needed to incentivize septic users to convert to municipal sewer systems, mitigating any local pollution impacts to the waterways. State funding for alternative water supply projects, particularly adaptive reuse programs and proven technologies like Aquifer Storage Recovery (ASR) and Reverse Osmosis (RO) treatment processes is also critical. As a leader in environmental stewardship and with the growing threat of global climate change, the City of Stuart further supports a statewide legislative effort in reducing carbon emissions associated with industrial, agricultural, and consumer use.

The City of Stuart SUPPORTS bolstering State funding of water quality and alternative water supply projects while providing annual appropriations for septic to sewer conversion programs to reduce localized pollution sources. The City of Stuart also SUPPORTS a statewide legislative effort in establishing measurable objectives towards reducing the overall carbon footprint of industrial, agricultural, and consumer sources within the State as a means of addressing the growing threat of global climate change.

2. LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

- **Community Redevelopment Agencies**
- **Regulation of Businesses and Professions**

Background: For more than 50 years, local governments in the State have been granted governmental, corporate, and proprietary powers expressly outlined in the Florida Constitution; enabling them to conduct municipal government, perform municipal functions, and render municipal services. Additionally, by law or resolution, each governing body has the Constitutional authority to transfer to or contract with another local government, any of its functions or powers as approved by its voters. These provisions were codified with the belief that the best government is the one closest to the people. In the 2017 and 2018 Legislative Sessions, hundreds of bills were filed without regard or respect for the establishment of local self-government and the principle of "home rule." Among these measures were broad attempts to disassemble community redevelopment agencies and preempt local governing regulations over businesses and professions, including the levying of local business taxes.

The City of Stuart OPPOSES any effort to undermine voter-derived Constitutional authorities of local self-government while urging the legislature to protect CRAs by not applying a "broad brush" to all programs for the shortcomings of a few. The City also OPPOSES any legislative effort to diminish local management of businesses and professions by preempting such policy at the state level.

3. REFORMING REVENUE SOURCES

- **Communication Services Tax**
- **Local Option Sales Tax**

Background: The Communication Services Tax (CST) currently accounts for more than $900k in annual revenue for the City of Stuart. And like many small municipalities, Stuart has few options to raise revenue. Previous legislative attempts to erode the CST during reform negotiations were met with strong backlash across the State and a "hold harmless" clause was applied to legislation in order to protect this funding source for local governments in the interim. The City of Stuart supports tax reform, but in a manner that is fair and equitable across the state. One solution for reform could include eliminating the local portion of the CST altogether. To compensate for the lost revenue the state could levy another half or full cent sales tax – with funds to be almost entirely distributed to local governments. By eliminating the local portion of the telecommunication-user tax (CST) and providing a statewide half or full-cent increase in sales tax with all funds earmarked for local governments, costs would be shifted from only residents, to tourists and residents alike. This change would allow for a more equitable and broad tax-base, benefitting all Florida residents. And without reform, local governments will be forced to reduce services or raise taxes on residents without shifting the burden across a broader tax base that includes guests and tourists.

The City of Stuart OPPOSES any legislation that erodes the CST without providing for an equal and fair funding source to match lost revenue. The City SUPPORTS tax reform by providing local governments with a more fair and equitable funding source via a statewide half or full-cent sales tax increase, with all funds from the additional tax, less administrative costs, to be earmarked for local governments.

4. PUBLIC SAFETY & WELLNESS

- **Railway Safety**

Background: With the introduction of new high-speed passenger trains and rail lines along existing paths, local governments are requesting new safety considerations at railway crossings. Currently local taxpayers are obligated to fund both the maintenance and capital costs associated with these safety improvements, necessary to mitigate impacts from private, commercial enterprise.

The City of Stuart SUPPORTS legislation that would improve railway safety requirements while shifting all or a portion of those costs to the originating companies whose operations impacts the everyday lives of local residents.