



## 2016 State Legislative Agenda



### **GENERAL LEGISLATIVE POLICY**

- Supports Florida League of Cities Legislative Priorities and Key Issues.
- Supports select policies from Alachua County, Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Santa Fe College, University of Florida, and FloridaWorks.

### **GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

- Supports local solutions for community concerns and needs for governance of the City utility.
- Supports expanded use of renewable energy and reasonable application of EPA Clean Power Plan Rule regarding investments of utilities prior to adoption.
- Supports inclusion of public acquisition of land within the watershed of an artesian spring as an eligible activity under the recently approved land acquisition state constitutional amendment.

### **COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Supports state investments, such as the Institute for the Commercialization of Research, to encourage development that attracts and retains local companies.
- Supports state financial assistance for a pilot project with community partners to enhance awareness and efficient utilization of employee health benefits.
- Supports state funding to enhance City's pilot program, Freedom in Motion, providing transportation services for the elderly.

### **JOB TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

- Supports state funding for Reichert House Youth Academy and programs that provide proven and effective prevention for at-risk youth with the goal of reducing the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system.
- Support state investment in programs creating or enhancing apprenticeships and on-the-job training in critical areas identified by local communities, including but not limited to: computers and digital and emerging technologies, such as solar construction and installation.

### **CAPITAL PROJECTS & APPROPRIATIONS REQUESTS**

- Supports state funding for the acquisition and restoration of Glen Springs property.
- Supports state and federal funding regarding SW 62<sup>nd</sup> Boulevard extension for right of way acquisition costs and construction.

Mayor Ed Braddy (At Large)  
 Mayor Pro Tem/Craig Carter (District 3)  
 Commissioner Charleston Goston (District 1)  
 Commissioner Todd Chase (District 2)  
 Commissioner Randy Wells (District 4)  
 Commissioner Harvey Budd (At Large)  
 Commissioner Helen Warren (At Large)  
 Russ Blackburn, City Manager  
 Ed Bielarski, General Manager for Utilities

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## **General Legislative Policy**

### **Preserve the City of Gainesville's Strategic Goals and Interests**

As a general policy, the City of Gainesville seeks to preserve its home rule authority to govern the City, its citizens, and its property. The City supports any legislation that will advance the City's strategic goals, that improves the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens, or that responsibly increases revenues or enhances the City's authority to conduct the public's business.

The City will oppose any legislation that mandates increased costs or loss of revenues, or that would diminish the fundamental home rule authority of the City. The City of Gainesville will oppose legislation by the State of Florida that preempts local authority to represent the interests of our citizens and will support efforts to repeal such preemptions that currently exist.

### **Florida League of Cities Legislative Priorities and Key Issues**

The City of Gainesville is a member of the Florida League of Cities (FLC). Members of the Gainesville City Commission and City of Gainesville staff participate in the FLC legislative policy-setting process and legislative policy councils. The City Commission generally supports the legislative priorities and key issue positions adopted by the FLC. Through the duration of the legislative session, City of Gainesville representatives will communicate our position on specific legislation and our concurrence or differences with the FLC position. As a Charter City under the Florida Constitution, the City of Gainesville supports the Home Rule Authority of local governments.

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## **General Government**

The City of Gainesville will seek and support bills and regulatory action during 2016 for the following issues.

### **Governance of Gainesville Regional Utilities**

The City of Gainesville opposes any state legislation that alters the governance of Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU). The governance of GRU is set forth by the charter of the City of Gainesville. Any modification to that governing structure should be made by the elected city officials of Gainesville and the voters of the City of Gainesville in accordance with that charter.

### **Local Government Pension Plans**

The City of Gainesville supports local authority to bargain changes to pension benefits under Statutes 175 and 185 as agreed upon by the City and local bargaining units. The City is supportive of amendments to Statutes 175 and 185 to allow a system that provides realistic minimum benefits, to allow for all excess premium tax revenue to be used to provide these

benefits, and to allow more flexibility to local governments, which is essential to enable local governments to react to rising costs and current revenue pressures.

Chapters 175 and 185 of the Florida Statutes were established under the pretext of providing a uniform retirement system for Firefighters (175) and Police Officers (185). The Statutes authorize the establishment and collection of excise taxes on property and casualty insurance policies sold within a municipality's corporate limits to be used to pay for pension benefits of firefighters and police officers. The Statutes also define minimum benefits and restrict the use of tax receipts above the base year (1997) to be used for "extra benefits."

### **Support for Expanded Use of Renewable Energy**

The City of Gainesville is seeking funding and/or tax incentives in support of our commitment to increasing our use of renewable energy by Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU). In addition to being among Florida's leading utilities in the deployment of solar energy, GRU has contracted to purchase approximately 100 MW of clean, local, renewable energy for GRU customers from the Gainesville Renewable Energy Center biomass plant, a privately held company.

GRU's commitments fulfill all elements of Section 10, Section 366.92 of HB 7117, in that they promote renewable energy, diversify the types of fuel used to generate electricity in Florida, lessen our regional and state-level reliance on natural gas, minimize the long-term volatility of fuel costs, and improve environmental conditions. The City of Gainesville also advocates for the expanded use of renewable energy across the State of Florida.

### **EPA Clean Power Plan Rule**

Over the last decade, the City of Gainesville/GRU has done exactly what we believe the EPA's Clean Power Rule intends to accomplish - greatly reduce carbon dioxide emissions. We set a goal of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to seven percent below 1990 values by the end of 2013 and, with a concerted effort, exceeded this goal with a thirteen percent reduction by the end of 2012. GRU has invested millions to add renewable energy to our generation mix, use more natural gas, and implement aggressive energy conservation programs since 2005. This has not been without a cost to our customers. GRU currently has the highest electric rates in the state of Florida, in part due to our actions taken to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>. With these factors in mind, there are two primary points we offer for consideration in proposed CO<sub>2</sub> rulemaking.

First, the proposed rule does not give credit for the significant investments made by utilities for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs to reduce greenhouse gas CO<sub>2</sub> prior to 2012. We believe the EPA should allow states to incorporate emission reductions made by electric systems prior to the effective baseline of 2012.

A second primary concern relates to the potential for stranded costs from early investments our community made to comply with EPA's Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR) and Clean Air

Mercury Rule (CAMR). While the EPA recognizes the increased costs to the consumers with load-shifting to natural gas, it does not consider the stranded costs for those units that still carry considerable debt. We would urge the EPA to fully consider Florida's unique situation with respect to fuel diversity, system reliability, economic growth, technological feasibility, and especially the investments and additional costs our customers already bear and any additional costs that will be forced upon them in the future.

### **Inclusion of Artesian Spring Under the Recently Approved Land Acquisition Constitutional Amendment.**

The City of Gainesville supports inclusion of public acquisition of land within the watershed of an artesian spring as an eligible activity under the recently approved land acquisition constitutional amendment. Glen Springs is located within the City of Gainesville and should be an eligible site for acquisition under the Environmental Land Acquisition program.

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## **Economic Development**

### **Innovation Square**

The City of Gainesville supports incentive programs available through the State of Florida to encourage the continued development of Innovation Square and the attraction and retention of companies that will utilize Innovation Square and benefit the local and state economy. Innovation Square is a significant redevelopment project located between Downtown Gainesville and the University of Florida campus. This project is a coordinated effort of the City of Gainesville, the University of Florida, and Shands. From being a super incubator to company relocation, Innovation Square will support research and development companies in the physical, engineering, or life sciences. Innovation Square has the capacity to bring huge benefits to Gainesville. The most obvious impacts will be in the areas of economic development and job creation/retention, among other benefits such as the redevelopment of the former Alachua General Hospital site and enhancement of the surrounding properties. Economic development programs such as those aimed at job creation/retention, business startup and incubator funds, and workforce training and development will be beneficial to Innovation Square. Additionally, the City of Gainesville and its Innovation Square development partners will actively pursue funding and incentive programs that can be utilized to assist in the infrastructure needs to improve the Innovation Square site and ultimately attract quality businesses and employers.

**Request:** The request is \$700,000 for utility projects and transit service improvements.

### **Eastside Redevelopment Area Initiatives: Former Kennedy Homes & GTEC Sites**

The largest undertakings of the Eastside Redevelopment area are the redevelopment of the former Kennedy Homes site and the Gainesville Technology Enterprise Center (GTEC) property. These redevelopment initiatives will provide new housing stock and employment opportunities within East Gainesville. The City is seeking funding and/or tax incentives in support of these initiatives to spur economic development, livability, and sustainable design in the area. Redevelopment will require utility upgrades, road and parking construction, stormwater treatment solutions, community outreach, marketing, and recruiting efforts.

The sites are located within a quarter mile of each other, about one mile from downtown Gainesville and two miles from the University of Florida, and are situated among well-established neighborhoods, schools, and churches, with additional natural amenities located nearby. The GTEC site serves as a gateway to East Gainesville and an economic catalyst not only for the area but also for new development within the district.

The former Kennedy Homes site which once served as public housing was demolished in order to stabilize and revitalize a significant portion of East Gainesville. The site, 15 acres total, contains a vacant 10 acre parcel and approximately 5 acres of wetlands. The redevelopment project will create a community which demonstrates functional sustainability through its design, its systems and its interactions with future residents. A community that embraces new urban design while placing an emphasis on responsible building construction practices and sustainable living systems that integrate engineering, function, and use in order to maximize the residents' living experience.

The GTEC business incubator and its associated amenities are located on part of the 12-acre GTEC site and are a key for its redevelopment. The redevelopment project will leverage the human capital and tangible resources associated with GTEC to spur economic development in the area. The proposed schematic Master Plan lays out an office and retail-focused, mixed-use development aiming to retain GTEC graduate companies in East Gainesville and attract additional economic activity to the vicinity.

**Request:** The request is for \$700,000 of capital to go towards the redevelopment of the former Kennedy Homes site and the GTEC expansion.

### **City's pilot program, Freedom in Motion, providing transportation services for elderly**

Seniors that live in Turley Creek Forest and the 400 Building in Gainesville will receive vouchers for transportation via the vehicle for hire company, Uber. Using Uber could provide substantial cost savings over purchasing a transit bus.

**Request:** The City is requesting \$500,000 to purchase vouchers for the pilot program to test the effectiveness of utilizing Uber for elderly transportation services over costly bus services.

## Effective and Proven Prevention Programs For At-Risk Youth

### Reichert House Youth Academy

Reichert House Youth Academy is a juvenile program that provides proven and effective prevention for at-risk youth with the goal of reducing the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system. Reichert House Youth Academy Students are taught job skills and learn employability skills. Our biggest success story is that two of the students become a lawyer and doctor.

**Request:** \$200,000 is requested to support continuation of job training program equipment and supplies for the at-risk youth population.

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## Capital Projects

### SW 62<sup>nd</sup> Boulevard Connector

The SW 62nd Blvd. Connector is a project of regional significance with demonstrated potential to reduce congestion and increase safety on the regional, state, and federal transportation systems (including portions of I-75, SR 24, SR 26, and SR 121). This project has strong community support and reflects the joint efforts of public agencies to address mobility needs in the metropolitan area. In addition, it aligns with recent efforts by the Florida Department of Transportation to address mobility needs in the I-75 corridor. The SW 62nd Blvd Connector will enhance system connectivity and expand modal transportation choices increasing mobility and accessibility to all users. The initiative focuses on the construction of a four-lane multimodal facility that expands the transportation network implementing innovative traffic management techniques and creating opportunity for implementation of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The project achieves the community's redevelopment objectives by generating employment opportunities, increasing community livability, and fostering regional economic growth. The total cost of the SW 62nd Blvd Connector project is \$100,000,000, and \$47,000,000 is paid for through local funding

The City has received federal funding to begin the initial planning and design which is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2015. As such, the City will be seeking the remaining \$53,000,000 from a variety of state and federal sources.

**Request:** The City of Gainesville shall begin initial discussions with the Florida Department of Transportation for inclusion and schedule in the Five-Year Work plan.

## **SW 6<sup>th</sup> Street Project**

The City of Gainesville identified the SW 6<sup>th</sup> Street corridor on their Capital Improvement Plan to address poor roadway conditions, flooding concerns, stormwater quality issues, inadequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and inefficient lighting infrastructure. The project has recently completed 60% construction plans which include the following:



- Stormwater Treatment through low impact development, bioretention facilities. These facilities will provide excess stormwater quality treatment which, in turn, will allow developers to purchase stormwater treatment credits from the City to meet their redevelopment requirements, reducing the capital cost and land required for developers to treat the water on their site.
- Roadway reconstruction to improve the current Pavement Index Condition score of 24 out of 100.
- Upgrade of a stormwater pipe to provide improved conveyance to greatly reduce current flooding concerns.
- Addition of in-street bicycle lanes and 10-15' wide pedestrian facilities.
- LED roadway and pedestrian lighting.

**Request:** \$500,000 is requested for the stormwater components of this project, out of a total \$2,000,000 construction estimate. A portion of the stormwater costs will be recovered through the aforementioned stormwater redevelopment credit system.

## **Restoration of the Glen Springs Property**

Glen Springs was historically classified as a fourth-magnitude spring (average flow between 0.1 and 1 cubic feet per second) and is located behind the Elks Lodge on N.W. 23rd Avenue in Gainesville, FL. Glen Springs is one of only two springs within the city limits. Glen Springs has a rich cultural history as the land that the spring is on has been occupied by humans for at least 3,000 years. Evidence of early use can be seen in pottery and tools that were found in and around the spring (Crawford, 1984).

The spring is on privately-owned property adjacent to a City-owned park called Ring Park. Recent flow measurements indicate that the spring would now be considered a fifth-magnitude spring due to a reduced flow rate. Water quality has also changed with an increase in nitrates being found in recent years of sampling.

The spring was a tremendously popular recreational site from the 1920s until the 1970s. A concrete-enclosed swimming pool was constructed, which measures approximately 25 feet by 150 feet, and is divided into three distinct segments. This allowed the spring to become a

popular swimming pool. During the past thirty years, Glen Springs has been used primarily as a swimming pool, recreation area, and fish breeding pond.

No longer able to be used as a swimming pool, the spring is currently being ignored. What could otherwise be an exceptional natural attraction in the City is known only to the Elks Lodge members, the few spring seekers in the area, and others who regularly enjoy fishing in the spring pool. Many enthusiastic Gainesville residents wish to call attention to the plight of Glen Springs, see it acquired by the City, used as a public park, and restored. It could serve as an historical site, nature park, and passive recreational area.

**Request:** The City of Gainesville is seeking \$3,400,000 in restore the springs to its natural state and allow for public access.

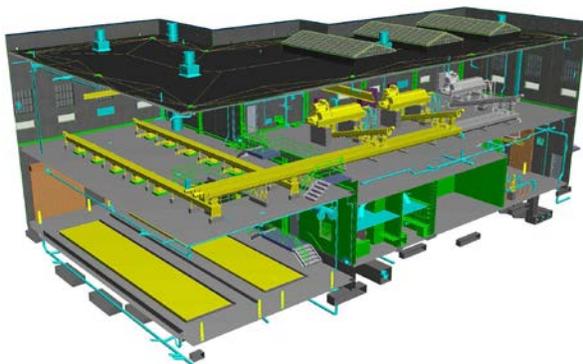
### **Paynes Prairie Sheetflow Restoration**

Funding is being requested for the Solar Tower, a Visitors Center, and the Prairie Tower - designed, but unfunded public access facilities - for the Paynes Prairie Sheetflow Restoration Project that is currently under construction. The Paynes Prairie Sheetflow Restoration Project is a \$29 million project that the City is currently constructing in order to improve water quality in Paynes Prairie and meet Florida Department of Environmental Protection regulatory requirements. The project will also help to restore 1,300 acres of wetlands within Paynes Prairie. A major component of the project is the opportunity to provide expanded, beneficial public access. The initial, rudimentary public facilities provide basic access, however, additional facilities are judged essential to developing a fully-mature and comprehensive program for education, nature viewing, and recreation, made possible by this investment in water resource improvements. The amount sought is 11 percent of the \$29 million total project cost.

**Request:** The City of Gainesville is seeking \$3,150,000 in funding for these Public Access Facilities, integral to the water quality/surface water resource protection project.

### **BioSolids Reuse Facility**

GRU provides wastewater service to a population of approximately 185,000 people in the Gainesville area. GRU operates two water reclamation facilities: Main Street Water Reclamation Facility (MSWRF) and Kanapaha Water Reclamation Facility (KWRF), which receive, treat, and beneficially reuse approximately 16 million gallons per day of wastewater. The facilities produce biosolids as a byproduct of the treatment process, which are currently used beneficially as a fertilizer and soil



amendment at a local farm. GRU's current biosolids process has been in operation for over 30 years. However, recent changes in local and state regulations have resulted in costly requirements that have made land application at GRU's existing site in Alachua County infeasible.

GRU is transitioning to a new biosolids reuse program via a multi-phased approach as follows:

Phase 1: Construction of new \$13 million biosolids dewatering facility - currently underway and expected to be complete in 2016. The newly constructed dewatering facility will reduce the water content of the biosolids to allow hauling and reuse by a variety of alternatives.

Phase 2: KWRF Improvements – a \$1.7 million phase is to begin in 2015 and be complete in 2016. This will include improvements to the screens at the KWRF which are needed to ensure that the dewatering facility described above can function reliably.

Phase 3: MSWRF Improvements – a \$3.6 million phase is to begin in 2017 and be complete in 2020. This will include improvements to the headworks and screens at the MSWRF, which are needed to ensure that the dewatering facility described above can function reliably.

**Request:** Provide \$1,000,000 in state funding for Fiscal Year 2016 to assist in the construction of Phase 1 and 2 of the project. GRU budgeted funds would match the requested amount during FY 2016.