



CITY OF VENICE FLORIDA

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Interoffice Memorandum

Edward F. Lavallee
City Manager

TO: Mayor Feinsod and City Council Members

FROM: Edward F. Lavallee, City Manager 

RE: Federal Legislative Support

DATE: November 19, 2020

Each year the Council develops a list of program priorities for which we seek federal legislative support. The list may include a detailed project activity for Venice, such as a request for funding for a capital project, or it may include broad-based support for programs such as beach renourishment, environmental protection, restrictions on offshore drilling, mental health programs for homeless, etc. Attached is a draft that contains the programs we have traditionally endorsed. Please consider any new or past programs and priorities you would recommend for inclusion in the fiscal 2021 legislative request from Venice.

In considering program requests, it is helpful to understand that most federal appropriations are awarded to state agencies, with authority to redistribute the assets to county and local entities. Direct project-level appropriations to local governments (formally known as earmarks) are less common. However, if you conceive of an innovative program design that would warrant a direct award we can certainly propose it to our legislative delegation. Please plan to discuss the legislative priorities at the December 8 Council meeting. Thank you.

EFL/JG

Attachment



CITY OF VENICE, FLORIDA FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 FEDERAL PRIORITIES FACT SHEET

1. SAFETY & HEALTH: Maintain Public Safety with First Responders and Enhance Health Precautions

The City of Venice owns and operates the City's Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services and Police Department. Keeping our City safe and healthy is our top priority. Our first responders are critical for us to maintain the safety and the health of our City. The impacts of the current global pandemic are extensive and have far-reaching consequences with all levels of government services. The COVID-19 pandemic along with storm events have affected Venice's resources both physically and financially. Access to funding is essential to maintain and enhance the City's first responder services during this pandemic and preparation for future storm events.

FY 2022 Requests:

- 1. The City respectfully requests Congressional support to provide \$200,000 to enhance Venice's Emergency Operations Center Equipment at the City's Public Safety Building. This funding would provide the needed computers and communications systems to enhance the City's preparedness and response to a disaster.**
- 2. The City of Venice population is under 25,000 and typically not included in a Federal funding opportunities, but the City requests Congressional support for disaster prevention and relief for smaller communities that are in need of financial assistance during this unprecedented global pandemic.**

2. ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE & PROTECTION: Harmful Algal Blooms

The City of Venice is deeply concerned about the effects of algal blooms that occur when colonies of algae grow out of control while producing toxic or harmful effects on people, fish, shellfish, marine mammals, and birds. The unusual high intensity and long duration of the 2018 *Karenia brevis* algal bloom suggests that much research and experimentation still needs to be done. These harmful algal blooms have a devastating effect on wildlife, ecosystem, economy, and quality of life.

FY 2022 Request: The City of Venice supports the allocation of Federal resources for research, implementation of mitigation strategies, and infrastructure upgrades – such as conversion of septic tanks to domestic sewer systems, outfall monitoring, and other water quality improvements – to help decrease the occurrence and effects of this harmful algae.

3. *ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Beach Renourishment & Preservation*

The City of Venice has a 50-year contract with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to renourish the beach every 10 years due to erosion impacts from the Venice Inlet. The City is most appreciative of the current support from the ACOE, and looks forward to the next renourishment which is scheduled to be completed in 2025. Maintaining a healthy beach profile is critical for protecting structures during storm events, reducing flooding impacts and for supporting tourism which is a primary economic revenue source for the region. The City of Venice proposes to discuss with the Army Corps of Engineers the prospects for implementing alternative methods to not only restore, but to also preserve and protect, the area's beaches during the next scheduled restoration project.

FY 2022 Request: The City of Venice respectfully requests continued support of beach renourishment projects as important storm protection, nesting habitat restoration and recreational opportunities. Additionally, the City proposes to discuss alternative means to protect beaches as opposed to the traditional reactive process of sand restoration.

4. *HUMAN SERVICES: VA Dept. Initiative to Assist in Homelessness and Treat Mental Illness in Veterans*

Because a lack of social services increases problems for society, especially for the homeless, those with mental illness, and those with alcohol and drug addictions – particularly veterans battling these issues – more ways of helping vets in need of these services must be identified and implemented. Many veterans face challenges throughout their lives that may lead them to lose their home and become homeless, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs states. Having homelessness in a community undermines the welfare of all residents. Developing jobs, reinstating mental health care clinics, increasing opportunities for vets and others to receive help and employment assistance to be able to become independent and self-sufficient are examples of ways to improve society now and in the future. The City asks that the VA Dept. create an initiative to assist with homelessness and mental illness in vets locally.

FY 2022 Request: The Department of Veterans Affairs formulate an initiative of viable alternatives to reduce homelessness and to treat mental illness in veterans needing these services.

5. HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Affordable Housing

Area businesses including critical service providers like the local hospital have conveyed to the City that they have difficulty in hiring and retaining employees due to a lack of affordable housing. Additionally, local land and construction costs preclude developers from creating residential units at affordable prices for low- and moderate-income workers.

FY 2022 Request: The City of Venice respectfully requests Congressional appropriations for programs that support acquisition of property and construction of housing units that are affordable to low- and middle-income residents (lower strata income workers).

6. TRANSPORTATION & QUALITY OF LIFE:

- a. **Ribbons of Venice:** The City of Venice has once again been designated a Silver Bicycle Friendly Community. There is community momentum to continue improvements to make Venice a safe and healthy place to ride bicycles for recreation and transportation purposes. The City has been working with a nonprofit agency to identify sidewalks, bicycle lanes and connections, and other opportunities to extend the existing Legacy Trail system by connecting it with parks, centers of commerce, and other destinations throughout the City and County. The connections in Venice have been identified and the City is seeking funds to construct them.
- b. **Roadway Infrastructure:** Motor vehicle operation and alternative transportation options, including bicycles, create a broad spectrum of mobility choices for residents and visitors. As the City continues to expand through the annexation of land and increase in population, spurred by its reputation as a desirable tourist and relocation destination, the roadway system experiences increased wear and stress on capacity. To continue to protect the City's quality of life while welcoming increasing numbers of new residents, seasonal occupants and vacationers, external funding support is needed. The mix of Sarasota County-owned, state-controlled and City-owned roads within the community's 16.8-mile geography challenges the City to acquire adequate funding for roadway expansion, improvement and ongoing support.

FY 2022 Requests:

- a. The City of Venice respectfully requests \$500,000 to construct multi-use trail connection points and bicycle lanes within the City to facilitate the regional trail system.
- b. The City respectfully requests a funding provision for direct allocation funding for local road systems. Specifically, Venice requests an appropriation of \$3,000,000 in the form of partnership funding, to be used to expand capacity for prioritized roadways within the City's boundaries.

7. ECONOMIC & AVIATION: Maintain Congressional Oversight of the Air Traffic Control System

The City of Venice owns and operates Venice Municipal Airport, which serves General Aviation and is an economic engine for Venice and the surrounding area. Congressional oversight ensures that communities of all sizes have access to air transportation and all airports get a fair share of the money in the Aviation Trust Fund disbursed to airports as grants for capital and planning projects to insure that we maintain a viable system of airports. Our network of airports drives business growth and commerce, and facilitates access to emergency services, medical care, disaster relief, firefighting, and many other critical services. Businesses, especially small- and mid-size ones, rely on these airports and general aviation aircraft to access rural markets, transport parts, tools and personnel between branches, and reach multiple locations in one day. Privatization would threaten this important economic activity and lifeline to our communities.

FY 2021 Request: The City respectfully requests continued support of maintaining Congressional oversight of the Air Traffic Control System to maintain General Aviation as a healthy segment of the aviation industry.