



# CITY OF VENICE

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Honorable Mayor John Holic, Members of the City Council,  
and Citizens of the City of Venice

I am pleased to present the proposed 2015 City of Venice Municipal Budget. The 2014 fiscal year has been one of substantial operational and fiscal activity. In the presence of a changing economy, our organization has been proactive in adjusting service levels to accommodate local demand. In the coming year, additional organizational changes are planned to ensure the most productive use of public funds in providing the broad array of professional local government services that distinguish the local workforce and the Council that leads it.

The fiscal 2015 budget year offers some opportunities for fiscal stability in local government that have been absent for the past several years. Early projections indicate a measurable growth in local property values. An upsurge in the issuance of building permits and related real estate activity demonstrate a resurgence in the region's economy. The city's General Operating Budget derives its primary revenues from property tax. Increases in those values help support delivery of quality public service. Increased consumer confidence and related local spending directly impact the generation of sales tax dollars. Sales tax dollars are another important local government revenue stream and a primary source of funds that support investment in capital projects such as infrastructure upgrades.

The Venice city government has adopted a strategic methodology to guide its fiscal and organizational future. In 2014, the Council engaged residents, business representatives, volunteer and social organizations, and schools, sports, and cultural leaders in the city's first public Think Tank. In a day-long interactive forum, the Council heard ideas and recommendations on all features of local government and the Venice community. With that information, the Council followed up with a two-day strategic planning session to assimilate the public comments into the Council's strategic priorities for fiscal 2015 and beyond. As the city's Comprehensive Plan is reviewed and refined, as land development regulations are systematically updated, as local zoning and enforcement tools are made more contemporary and relevant, as city staff and administration advance regulatory instruments that support "best practices" and healthy community, the Council will continue to gauge tactical level planning with an eye toward future Venice; retaining the essence of an environment and culture that distinguish it as most desirable, while applying strategic decision making to ensure that planned growth and related contemporary change are properly scaled and balanced.

Within the city's organizational structure several departments experienced changes in activity during the past year. Following are highlights of some of these activities.

- The Police Department consolidated its dispatch services with Sarasota County. Incoming calls for police service are now routed through the county communications center. Previously, only "911" calls were answered at the county communications center. With the completion of the consolidation project, all emergency and non-emergency calls go directly to the county site. From that central location, Venice police are dispatched to respond to calls
- A second School Resource Officer was assigned to Venice High School. The Police Department now provides two full-time officers to serve in this important safety and liaison function
- With the closing of the local jail, Venice police now transport all incarcerated arrestees to the county detention facility in Sarasota
- Parking control on public streets and in public parking lots in the downtown business district is now managed by a civilian part-time worker. This task was formerly performed by a uniformed police officer
- The Public Works Department added two workers to the maintenance crew to supplement the workforce responsible for road repairs, park services and general property maintenance. The Department has systematized its work order and maintenance schedules for more efficient response to demands for service
- The Public Works Department employed part-time workers in the busy season as a cost-effective supplement to the full-time labor force
- The Engineering Department redefined the grants manager position to relieve that position of tasks associated with grant project field inspections. This change allows more time for grants research and grants application writing. The new grants writer position is now located in the Finance Department to be more closely aligned with the city's responsibility for grant reporting and auditing
- The Fire Department added three firefighters to increase engine company strength and enhance response capacity to fire emergencies
- An IT Network Specialist was added to the Information Services Department to support the ever increasing demand for computer-related technical assistance
- The Building Department has experienced a significant increase in applications for building permits, plans review, and field inspections. With more than 4,000 building permits issued, the activity level in the Building Department is surpassing service demands that occurred during the building boom in the early 2000's. To support this increasing activity and maintain high quality and efficient service, the department has added a Deputy Building Official, a Senior Building Inspector, and part time clerical assistant
- In the City Clerk's office, a part-time Deputy Clerk position was upgraded to its former full-time status. Among the tasks performed by this position are support for the recording of meetings and preparation of meeting agendas
- During the current year, the Venice Airport added a Property Administrator to its labor force. This position is responsible for all aspects of oversight and management of property and facility leases on Airport land. The Airport currently manages more than 400 individual lease agreements with tenants using airport property for non-aeronautical purposes

- The Venice Airport has been very successful in attracting federal and state grant funds to improve its facilities. In the last year, the airport completed an \$8.3 million project to improve runway 5-23. The significant undertaking included redefining the airport's fence-line and supporting modifications to the adjoining Lake Venice Golf Course. Airport staff have successfully received, implemented, and completed related large-scale grant projects supporting environmental assessments, taxiway upgrades and reconstruction. The airport staff is currently working toward a \$10 million grant to reconstruct runway 13-31. This grant will significantly improve the runway but will also reposition the runway surface approximately 725 feet to remove 24 private residences from a cautionary area defined as the *Runway Protection Zone (RPZ)*
- The Utilities Department broke ground for replacement of a membrane system instrumental in the Water Department's reverse osmosis process. The \$5+ million project is one of a myriad of significant capital improvement and infrastructure upgrade projects occurring citywide. Financing for the extensive Utilities Department work comes from a \$20 million bond approved by the City Council. The multi-year program incorporates a proactive maintenance and replacement strategy to forecast long-term and short-term capital project work

In the FY15 budget, in addition to absorbing last year's seven temporary employees at cost of \$452,000 into the operating budget, I am recommending these additional employees:

- The currently vacant position of Assistant City Manager will be filled to provide additional administrative capacity. The assistant will provide oversight on inter-department activities, assist in coordinating special events planning, and will provide operational assistance to the city's Enterprise Funds and departments in the General Operating Budget
- The Engineering Department will add a Storm Water Technician to perform important storm water inspections and related field tasks. The new technician will also assume project-related field work previously incorporated into the former grants writer position
- The Planning Department is experiencing several changes. A Planning/GIS Specialist is being added to support the rapidly increasing planning and zoning workload. To improve efficiency of the zoning enforcement task and more closely align personnel with the zoning function, a Code Enforcement Supervisor will be added. The position will function as a working field manager to oversee and support code inspections and enforcement. Finally, a ½ time administrative assistant position will be restored to its former full-time level to provide project and special events coordination and general clerical support for planning and zoning tasks
- The Police Department has sacrificed several positions during the economic recession and is having difficulties maintaining service coverage for the city. Couple this with the closing of the jail and there are times when an extra officer would be of great benefit to our residents. With this in mind the addition of one police officer is being recommended

For years, the city's vehicle fleet maintenance has been outsourced to a private vendor for maintenance and repair. With some coordination provided by larger departments, the outsourced provider largely orchestrates regular service work on cars and trucks. To provide more comprehensive oversight and management of this function, a Vehicle Fleet Supervisor will be added to the city's workforce. The position will be a working supervisor to function in a proactive role of examining the city's fleet, developing a strategic citywide fleet depreciation

plan, working with each department that operates city vehicles, and generally coordinating use, replacement, and assignment of this important city asset.

The 2013-2014 year has been one of accomplishment for Venice. Following two years of discussions and requests to the Army Corps of Engineers and the federal Office of Management and Budget the city was awarded a \$10 million grant for beach renourishment. At the request of the city, the award is being provided a year ahead of its normal 10-year schedule to ensure that restoration work is performed in advance of further beach erosion.

The City of Venice and Sarasota County executed an agreement for transfer of maintenance responsibilities of approximately thirteen miles of local roads. This issue has been in discussion for several years. The successful execution of this agreement creates an efficiency of repair and maintenance between city and county work forces. The city will take over service for eleven miles of roads largely situated in neighborhoods west of the inter-coastal waterway. The county will assume responsibility for sections of road on Pinebrook Road and Laurel Road. Individual roads will be resurfaced or improved as needed as part of the transfer agreement.

The city and county are participating in the creation of a countywide Master Parks Plan. The project will include an assessment of all current park and recreational areas, define desirable levels of resources and facilities for public use, and incorporate a multi-year strategy to achieve the collective desired outcome.

The Venice Police Department conducted its first Citizens Police Academy. The nine-week course provided instruction and inter-active role playing for twenty five citizens on various features of municipal police work. The program was well received and is in demand for a sequel.

The city has been successful in attracting special events and this year is no exception. Along with perennial favorites, including the Venice Sharks Tooth Festival, arts & crafts shows, Italian American Club Feast and Carnival, Women's Sertoma Sun Fiesta, Venice Nokomis Rotary Arts Festival, numerous car shows, and the second annual Venice Brew Bash, for the first time the city also hosted a youth sailing regatta. The popular annual Sun Coast BBQ Bash enjoyed special significance this year as it was also Florida's State BBQ Championship event for 2014. Also, returning for the third consecutive year is the REV-3 Triathlon. Finally, Venice recently agreed to host the very popular Chalk Festival in the fall of 2014. This event was, formerly held in Sarasota.

The operational achievements for 2014 are significant. Likewise the operational adjustments among city departments and staff have been dynamic. While the organization strives for stability it must be responsive to ever changing external environmental forces. Major shifts in the regional economy and its effect on tourist influx and the building industry have impacted service demands among the city's workforce. Providing efficient quality service is always the goal. The fluctuating external economy directly impacts the city's operating revenues. One of the city's economic strategies is to develop revenue streams less affected by the local economy. Diversifying the income streams for governmental operations improves the city's economic forecasting ability. Following is a financial summary of the proposed FY15 City of Venice budget.

The proposed City of Venice General Fund budget for fiscal 2015 is balanced – projected revenues support projected expenses. The balanced budget proposal is achieved without any

change in the property tax rate. Under the proposed FY15 budget plan the current mileage rate of 3.1000 remains unchanged while the debt service millage will be reduced to 0.1920 from 0.2020.

The General Fund total revenue projection for FY15 is \$22,952,923. The current year General Operating budget total is \$22,337,517. The proposed budget increases the total by \$615,406. The new total represents a 2.76 percentage increase to the adjusted General Fund FY14 budget. The projected property tax revenue for Venice is calculated on a property asset total of \$3,020,689,268. The 2015 forecasted taxable property value for Sarasota County is \$43,378,837,142.

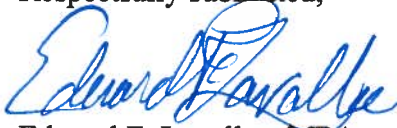
Enterprise Funds represent a significant portion of the city's budget. These programs are designed to operate with revenues generated from fees and service costs. Unlike General Operating Budget programs, the Enterprise Funded programs are self-supporting. Revenues from these programs are not comingled with General Operating Budget revenues but are maintained in separate accounts for operating use and accounting efficiency. Enterprise Fund revenues and expenses are displayed separately but constitute an important component of the FY15 City of Venice budget total of \$104,876,035.

The City of Venice's budget remains a tool to fund the delivery of local government services and to enact projects and programs that support the community's vision. Venice's adopted vision reads: ***Maintain Venice as a vibrant, charming, historic community in which to live, work, and play.***

In accordance with City Council's vision statement and Strategic Plan, Goal Three, Objective 1, I have maintained a balanced budget without the use of reserve funds while maintaining that which is great about Venice. The strategies employed to create the fiscal year 2014-2015 budget include the following:

- Adopt a General Fund operating budget of \$22,952,923
- Maintain an unassigned fund balance reserve in the General Fund in excess of 25 percent of expenditures
- Based upon a gross taxable value of \$3,020,689,268 adopt the same millage rate of 3.1000 as last fiscal year
- Based upon a gross taxable value of \$3,020,689,268 reduce the currently adopted millage for debt service to 0.1920 from 0.2020
- Continue to evaluate recurring and non-recurring expenses for cost savings opportunities
- Apply increase of ad valorem taxable value of 5.98 percent and the increase due to new construction of 1.76 percent to the General Fund operating budget
- Continue to promote Enterprise Fund growth to sustain and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of public services

Respectfully submitted,



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City Manager