



## **2020 CITY OF VENICE STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

The City of Venice wishes to express its gratitude to the Florida State Legislature for its work to provide the best and highest quality of life for residents of the state and especially, residents of Venice. We are greatly thankful for previous support of road reconstruction, beach renourishment, and other actions for the benefit of our citizens. The following needs have been identified by Venice City Council. The City of Venice requests your help with these important projects:

### **Stormwater Outfall Monitoring and Water Quality Treatment**

This multi-year project was funded in 2019 to initiate the first phase – pilot testing of water quality from two selected stormwater outfalls in the City of Venice. The project goal is to identify potential sources of pollutants entering the Gulf of Mexico from outfalls along the Venice shoreline and implement strategies to mitigate the pollutant risk. The project methodology is to systematically collect and analyze water samples from the defined stormwater outfalls to determine pollutant levels. For those outfalls determined to discharge potentially harmful nutrient loads that may adversely affect water quality in the Gulf and support the proliferation of red tide or other harmful organic growth, the next step would be to backtrack the water source and institute corrective actions to reduce or eliminate the pollutant discharge at its point of origin.

The City respectfully requests support of phase 2, which will include expanding outfall testing to include automatic sampling equipment that will measure discharge flow rate and concentration analysis at priority outfalls, additional comprehensive testing and preliminary design of construction projects to provide additional water quality treatment prior to discharge. Phase 2 is the continuation of a seven-year program to implement water quality improvement projects to reduce pollutant loading from nutrients and bacteria discharge into the Gulf of Mexico as a mitigation to red tide and beach closure. This project is dedicated to improving important water resources and protecting the beaches as the No. 1 economic driver of Venice and surrounding areas.

### **Wastewater Management**

Septic System Eliminations – This project is directed at environmental improvement through a plan to eliminate the use of private septic systems in the City of Venice. The project is multi-phased and incorporates the following steps:

1. Identify all private septic systems within the jurisdictional boundaries of Venice. Currently, there are an estimated 50 known private septic systems.

2. Through a program of voluntary compliance, provide septic system testing to assess the functional capabilities and performance of each system.
3. Provide funding for the expansion of the municipal wastewater infrastructure system:
  - Support the engineering of a wastewater infrastructure design determined necessary to provide access to residential, business and industrial locations currently operating with septic systems.
  - Support the construction of wastewater infrastructure expansion.
4. Provide funding to subsidize the lateral line installation and connection of private septic system users to the municipal wastewater collection system.

For phase 1 of this project, the City requests \$500,000 to support voluntary private system testing and initiate engineering design for infrastructure expansion of the municipal wastewater collection system.

**Vacuum Sewer Collection System** – The City supplies water and wastewater to a large manufactured home community. The sewer system, installed in the 1960s, has a very high level of inflow and infiltration (I&I) of stormwater into the system during rain events. I&I is very expensive to manage and sometimes results in wastewater overflows. The City is going to upgrade the sewer system and remove 8 lift stations and use one central vacuum station, conveying it to an existing master force main. The City requests legislative support for this project that will significantly reduce sewer inflows, eliminate wastewater spills due to inflow and help with overall sewer system operation and maintenance cost.

## **Water Production**

**Water Booster Station** – The City of Venice needs to improve the ability to boost water pressure to the northeast portion of the City to improve fire protection requirements and pressure for peak demands. The northeast part of the City has seen substantial economic growth, and the current booster pumping facility is located several miles from this area. As a result, the City is planning a new water booster station, ground storage tank and emergency interconnection with Sarasota County for the northeast portion of the City. The new emergency interconnect with Sarasota County would allow water to flow in the event of a major failure in the City's water system.

The City requests legislative support for this project, which would provide water to an area that is seeing substantial economic growth along with protecting the City in the event of a major failure in the City's water system.

**Second Stage RO Unit** – The City is also investing in water conservation by developing a more efficient water treatment system. The environmental benefit will be that less water needs to be withdrawn from the coastal aquifer to meet potable water demands in the City. Adding a second stage membrane to our existing reverse-osmosis water treatment facility will increase the recovery rate from the current 50% to 75%. Thus, in order to produce 75 gallons of potable water, we would only need to withdraw 100 gallons from the brackish groundwater source.

The City requests legislative support for this continued effort in Venice's water conservation program.

## Beach Renourishment

Renourishing the beach serves to protect the safety and welfare of this Florida coastal community. Renourishment is important for storm protection, marine turtle nesting and as a tourism/economic driver. The City of Venice appreciates the funding that has been received to date, including FY18 monitoring that is currently funded under an active state grant agreement.

The City requests ongoing legislative support for the statewide beach renourishment and inlet management program, as this will provide funding availability as we move toward our next renourishment event in 2025. The City also continues to support the state as it seeks new methods to resolve erosion issues.

## 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. It should be possible for working families and our more vulnerable citizens to afford housing and still have enough money for basic expenses like groceries and gas. Further, it has been reported that more than \$2 billion has been diverted from the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund in the last 10 years alone – some on tax breaks, some on balancing the budget, some on pet projects. The City believes this money should be returned to the Trust and spent on affordable workforce housing.

The City of Venice respectfully requests state 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). The City also requests an increase in funding for CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) and HOME partnership programs to assist in these endeavors.

## Support Home Rule

The City of Venice requests the support of legislation that provides for Home Rule authority for cities and counties to make decisions that reflect the unique needs of the community and the wishes of its citizens.

1. It is imperative that the state **not impose unfunded mandates or reduce the revenue of local governments** by reducing taxes, such as the Communication Services Tax and the Business Tax, or through the \$50,000 Homestead Exemption, that affect local government.
2. Provide further **relief from the current requirements in funding 175 and 185 pension plans**, which can only be used for enhancements to existing contracts.
3. **Repeal of the state law that prohibits Home Rule in regard to new short-term rental ordinances** or amending existing ordinances.

## **Increase Programs to Help Homeless, Mental Illness and Addiction, Especially for 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, the Florida Legislature is encouraged to find means of helping these citizens – with a focus on veterans – in dire need of services. Having homelessness in a community undermines the welfare of all residents.

Developing jobs, reinstating state mental health treatment facilities, and increasing opportunities for veterans and others to receive help to be able to become independent and self-sufficient are examples of ways to improve society now and in the future.

## **Transportation Funding**

Support legislation that preserves local control of transportation planning, provides equitable transportation funding among municipalities and counties, and provides opportunities for additional options for municipal transportation infrastructure projects.

## **Incentives for Alternative Energy and Energy Conservation and Efficiency Improvements**

The City of Venice encourages the Florida Legislature to provide any incentives possible to encourage citizens to retrofit their homes and businesses with energy efficient and alternative energy products; and to provide funding opportunities for local governments to use alternative energy products.

## **No Oil or Gas Drilling**

The City of Venice is opposed to any drilling for gas or oil in the Gulf of Mexico within 10 miles of its shoreline, as well as hydrologic fracking in the City limits. The beaches are a natural and economic asset to the area. The City of Venice and other local government entities have joined in a commitment to preserve the ecological balance and natural beauty of the area, which such drilling activities threaten.

## **The City of Venice Supports the Florida League of Cities' Legislative Priorities for 2020.**

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