MINUTES
City of Cocoa
City Council Budget Priorities Meeting & Planning Special Meeting

April 29, 2026

A Special City Council Meeting was held on Wednesday, April 29, 2026, in Cocoa City Hall, in City Council Chambers, located at 65 Stone Street, in Cocoa, Florida, 32922, as publicly noticed.

I. Opening Matters:

Mayor Blake called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m.

Cassidy Burnett led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance and Blake Posten led the assembly in the Invocation.

II. Delegations:

Anthony Douglas, 530 A Ln., Cocoa, spoke about the Cocoa Little League and the field conditions.

Krystal Wald, Blake Posten and Cassidy Burnett spoke about Stradley Park.

Margie Harris, 622 S. Carolina Ave., Cocoa, spoke regarding S. Carolina Avenue and the flooding issues.

Ashley Ingham, 1209 Purdue Way., Cocoa, spoke about the Pineridge area and the need for a park.

The City Clerk took the roll.

PRESENT:	Michael C. Blake	Mayor
	Alex Goins	Deputy Mayor
	Lavander Hearn	Councilmember
	Lorraine Koss	Councilmember
	Patricia Weeks	Councilmember
	Anthony Garganese	City Attorney

Stockton Whitten	City Manager
Lori Chabot	Recording Secretary

ABSENT:

OTHER STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Abigail Morgan, Public Works Director; Rebecca Bowman, Finance Director; Charlene Neuterman, Community Services Director; Jonathan Lamm, Fire Chief; Evander Collier, Police Chief; Jack Walsh, Utilities Director; Lorne Stinnett, HR Director; Mary Humbert, Director of Business Systems and Innovation; Samantha Senger, Communications & Economic Development Director; Luci Ribeiro, Planner; Mitch Lawyer, Interim Chief Technology Officer; and David Grissom, Helpdesk Support Tech.

III. Approval of Agenda:

1. Agenda: Special Meeting of April 29, 2026. (2026-190).

Ms. Senger submitted a Resolution (2026-033) for Council Approval and to authorize Ms. Bowman or her designee to be assigned as the Administrative Official for the Federal Railroad Administration Congressionally Directed Spending for the Brightline Station and requested this be added to the Agenda.

* **MOTION by Councilmember Koss; Seconded by Deputy Mayor Goins to approve the agenda with the addition of the requested item.**

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Goins, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

Mayor Blake asked Council to review their own priorities and provide one or two for consideration. He reminded Council that there will be another priorities meeting.

IV. Staff Presentation:

City Manager Whitten provided a presentation[1] outlining the City's priorities for the coming year. Ms. Senger advised Council of the legislative priorities and reviewed the appropriations and economic incentives. She also notified Council of a new

[1] Exhibit A: City Council Priorities and Planning Special Meeting Presentation

partnership with Merchant McIntyre who will assist the city in identifying possible grants.

Ms. Senger added that staff has brought back information regarding an LED Board at Helow Park to include two purchase options. She discussed the park and the options for LED board. Option 1 would be most visible due to the intersection. Option 2 would be a double-sided sign.

Councilmember Koss asked if this had been approved, and City Manager Whitten replied that it was brought to the Council previously but they had asked for more information. He asked Council for direction on this item.

Councilmember Hearn stated this is one of his priorities and would like option 1.

* **MOTION by Councilmember Hearn; Seconded by Mayor Blake to approve Option 1, with discussion.**

Deputy Mayor Goins asked him to provide where the funds would come from.

Councilmember Koss stated her concerns that the signs were all in one area. She added that there is a good option on US 1 and Michigan. She likes the LED board but asked to be cognizant of the whole city. She stated she is concerned with where the dollars would come from. She also noted that she is not in favor of taking the funds from Junny Rios Park.

Councilmember Weeks stated she did not know the money had to be identified. She had not seen this before. She believed staff would allocate funds. She also objected to taking the funds from Junny Rios.

Deputy Mayor Goins disagreed, stating that he would rather Council identify where the funds come from instead of staff.

Councilmember Koss asked Councilmember Hearn if he's proposing this project to be paid from the current budget or next year's budget. In response, he would like it as soon as possible especially with hurricane season coming up. Discussion continued as to where to put the sign.

Deputy Mayor Goins mentioned Provost Park and that it had been left behind for a long time.

Councilmember Koss also mentioned Travis Park and Recreation Center and that it has been left behind/neglected.

Councilmember Weeks stated the splash pad began before she arrived, however she agreed the cost could be too extensive, especially the ongoing maintenance. She wanted to use some of the funds for District 3 as she thought it was set aside. She also asked if funds for the splash pad are used elsewhere, will there be funds available for Junny Rios?

Deputy Mayor Goins emphasized the needs for Cocoa Little League. He pointed out that they are here tonight and need help.

Councilmember Koss shared that she likes the LED signs but not at the expense of Junny Rios Park.

Discussion continued among Council, Attorney Garganese and City Manager Whitten as to where the funds could come from.

* **MOTION by Councilmember Hearn; Seconded by Mayor Blake to approve an LED board using Option 1 and approve staff making any necessary budget changes for the current year.**

AYES: Blake, Goins, Hearn

NAYS: Koss, Weeks

Motion passed 3-2.

Mayor Blake opened the item up to the public for comments. There being no questions or comments, the discussion was closed to the public.

Ms. Morgan spoke about the Junny Rios items proposed at a previous meeting (exercise trail equipment, BBQ grills, playground shade and rubber mulch surfacing for playground) and that staff does not recommend the shades.

Councilmember Weeks asked if she could be part of selecting the equipment. In response, City Manager Whitten replied she could.

Councilmember Weeks added there is room for a second pavilion and that is needed.

City Manager Whitten explained that there will need to be a site plan prepared. The dollar amount is not known; however, City Manager Whitten stated the cost for the pavilion was previously $94,000 and is likely now $150,000 with a total for Junny Rios roughly around $234,000.

* **MOTION by Councilmember Weeks; Seconded by Mayor Blake to approve spending up to $300,000 for items at Junny Rios Park and approve staff making any necessary budget changes for current year.**

AYES: Blake, Goins, Hearn, Koss, Weeks (5-0)

The presentation continued and Property Tax Information was discussed. Over the last 10 years the city has seen an 11% growth. For each dollar the city receives approximately 37%.

Ms. Bowman stated there are also unknown expenses. Staff is applying for grants for items, but it is an unknown. She also shared the legislative changes (possible) and how those could affect the budget. As a result, the city is left with a shortfall of $430,000 to start the year.

Additionally, Fire Department OT will leave a shortfall according to the trend from 2015 to date and the city will need to find recurring revenue. Chief Lamm added that the OT is due to non-work related injuries. The department is required to have minimum staffing, and this has created additional OT. They are rotating floater positions to meet the needs and the mandates. He added the HS program is helping to fill the gap.

City Manager Witten spoke on the public safety needs and public infrastructure. There is a need to add resources (police and fire) as the city continues to grow. Chief Lamm added that due to growth there will need to be an additional station, likely in the industry road area.

City Manager Whitten continued speaking about the community needs and that the new commercial area and train station will be a taxable build. These will increase the tax base and could help with some of the costs.

Krystal Wald, Secretary of the Cocoa Little League, shared she is a CHS graduate and lives in the city. She and her husband joined the BOD at Stradley Park and stated the baseball side is in a state of disrepair. She provided a packet with photos and explained the needs of the League. She believes there are some safety concerns as well and shared a few pictures illustrating those concerns. Some dugouts may be salvageable; however, some show a great deal of wood rot. The t-ball fields have no shading. She is asking for funding assistance for the repairs.

Councilmember Hearn commented it was a great presentation and thanked her. He believes Council will take action to help. He suggested she present to the County as well and bring it to their attention.

Deputy Mayor Goins agreed and stated it has been a slow process on getting the bids. They all see the problems and agree it needs to be done. He thanked her for coming.

Councilmember Koss also said thanked her for coming and asked if grants were available.

City Manager Whitten added that their most urgent need is their septic system. He added that the Health Department has advised they will no longer be able to use the concession. The septic needs to be vacuumed and then reinspected. There are four septic systems, and they will all need to be replaced; each one is roughly $30,000, so to replace all four, it is roughly a total $120,000. This is an immediate need to even be usable.

Blake Poston spoke and asked how it got to this point. In response, City Manager Whitten explained the history of the park and how it was to be managed, however, now there is a new agreement between the County and City.

Councilmember Koss asked if that system was in an area that allows for new septic systems. Ms. Morgan replied that the basin goes to the St Johns.

Councilmember Hearn suggested that going forward regarding the Brevard County contract, can we have a separate account to pay for park problems? In response, City Manager Whitten stated that part of the request to the State included septic issues at Stradley.

Mayor Blake asked if we have to replace the septic systems, do they have to be advanced systems? City Manager Whitten and Ms. Morgan both replied they likely would and that would be the goal.

* **MOTION by Councilmember Koss; Seconded by Councilmember Weeks to approve the four septic replacements and directed staff to look for the funding, possibly from Junny Rios and approve staff to make any necessary budget changes for the current year.**

AYES: Blake, Goins, Hearn, Koss, Weeks

Motion Passed Unanimously (5-0)

City Manager Whitten explained the process and a potential timeline. This will depend on how the Health Department assesses the needs after they vacuum and what the next step would be.

Discussion continued about the Stradley Park needs, other expenses, both known and unknown. City Manager Whitten offered a reminder of the Code of Conduct – Ordinance 2002-08.

Mayor Blake opened the discussion to the public. There being no questions or comments, Mayor Blake closed the discussion.

V. Public Comment:

Blake Poston provided some history and concerns for the parks, adding that this should be addressed by all four districts. Kids cannot play at their park, and others don't want to come to Stradley.

Cassidy Burnett lives in College Manor and shared her history and stated her kids played on these fields and can't now.

Marjorie Harris spoke about the flooding in the area from rain. She is asking the board to include gutters and drains for this area in the FY27 budget.

Ashley Ingham is asking for a playground in the Pine Ridge area. There is currently not a playground for the kids in this area. Their roads have potholes and are not being maintained. Their neighborhood feels it has been forgotten. She identified a lot or two that are empty and Deputy Mayor Goins asked if they were city owned. She believed one was and another is available for purchase.

Mayor Blake read a card from Alton Edmond regarding a need for speed bumps.

City Manager Whitten stated that he has received lists from council. Mayor Blake is asking Council for 1-2 priority items.

Councilmember Weeks stated her #1 priority was addressed. She will look over her list.

Councilmember Hearn said that he would like to see staff look for grants to entice businesses to come to Cocoa. He would also like to add a park possibly on the Save-a-lot property and/or a parcel to the east.

Councilmember Koss said we need a park in a park desert; we need to clean up corridors and put a bus shelter on Clearlake.

Deputy Mayor Goins stated the S. Carolina Street project is for a stormwater project. He would like to see scholarships for currently enrolled college students and to add a door to the men's restroom at Provost Park. A petition has been signed for the basketball court in Provost requesting lights that will cover the entire court.

Mayor Blake has two concerns. One of which will require action. He stated that he, the City Manager, and the City Attorney along with other local representatives, have worked diligently on the Brightline Station and they are getting it on the map. He is requesting approval of a second addendum to the City Manager's contract to extend it to allow him to continue his work. This extension would go to July 30, 2029.

Mayor Blake asked Attorney Garganese for his input as to the request for the contract extension. He replied an extension is all that is needed, it is not a new contract.

* **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Councilmember Hearn to extend the City Manager's Contract (less than 2 years) to July 30, 2029, with no pay raise other than regular pay raises.**

AYES: Blake, Goins, Hearn, Weeks

NAYS: Koss

Councilmember Weeks asked when the current contracts ends. City Manager Whitten replied Oct 29, 2027.

Mayor Blake opened the discussion to the public.

Aleck Greenwood, 640 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, spoke highly about City Manager Whitten and is very supportive of the contract extension.

There being no further comments, the public portion of the discussion was closed.

Deputy Mayor Goins stated he didn't vote for City Manager Whitten initially, but he has done everything that he said he was going to do.

Councilmember Koss emphasized the Strategic plan and would like Council to focus on a strategic plan.

VI. Adjournment:

* **MOTION by Deputy Mayor Goins; Seconded by Mayor Blake to adjourn the meeting.**

AYES: Blake, Goins, Hearn, Koss, Weeks

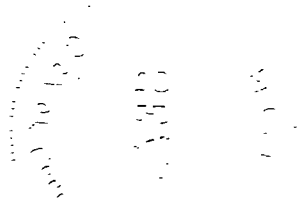
Motion Passed Unanimously (5-0)

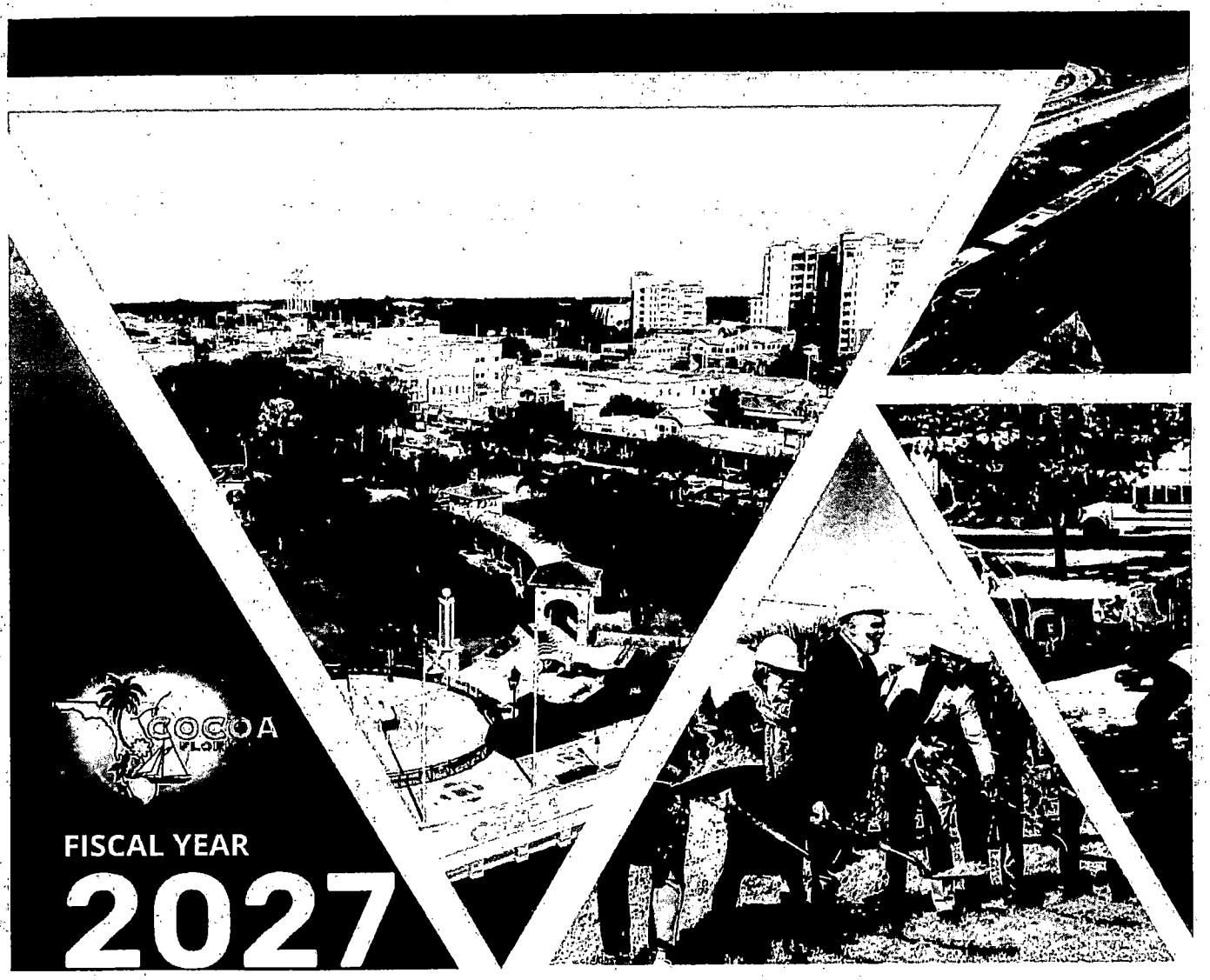
The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Michael C. Blake, Mayor

ATTEST:

Monica Arsenault, City Clerk
(Transcribed by Lori Chabot, Recording Secretary)





CITY COUNCIL

Priorities and Planning

Special Meeting

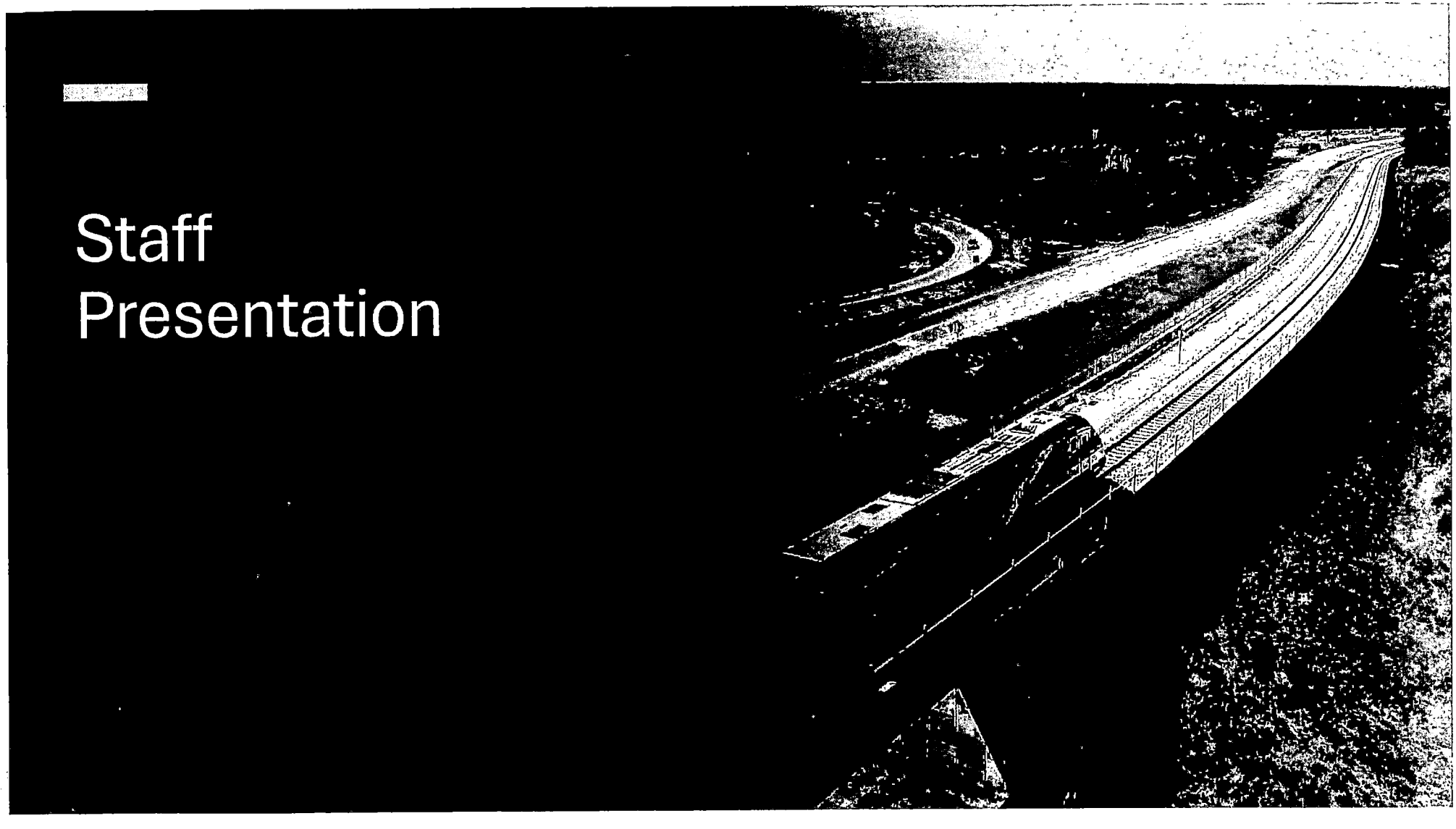
April 29, 2026

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Staff Presentation
4. Council Priorities
5. Public Comment
6. Adjournment



Staff Presentation



Legislative Priorities

- Support for Federal Grant Funding for Cocoa's Multi-modal Station
- Protection of Local Home Rule
- Property Tax Reform
- Restrictions on Land Use Regulations
- Additional State Funding for SHIP Program Affordable Housing Initiatives
- Community Redevelopment Areas
- Continued Funding of Hiring Bonus and Incentive Pay for First Responders

Appropriations Requests

State Appropriations Requests

- State Road 524 and State Road 501 Curve Widening and Station Access Road
- J&K Septic to Sewer Conversion Project Funding
- Dr. Joe Lee Smith Community Healthcare Facility
- Stradley Park Septic to Sewer Conversion
- Provost Park Redevelopment
- Water Quality Baffle Box Installation

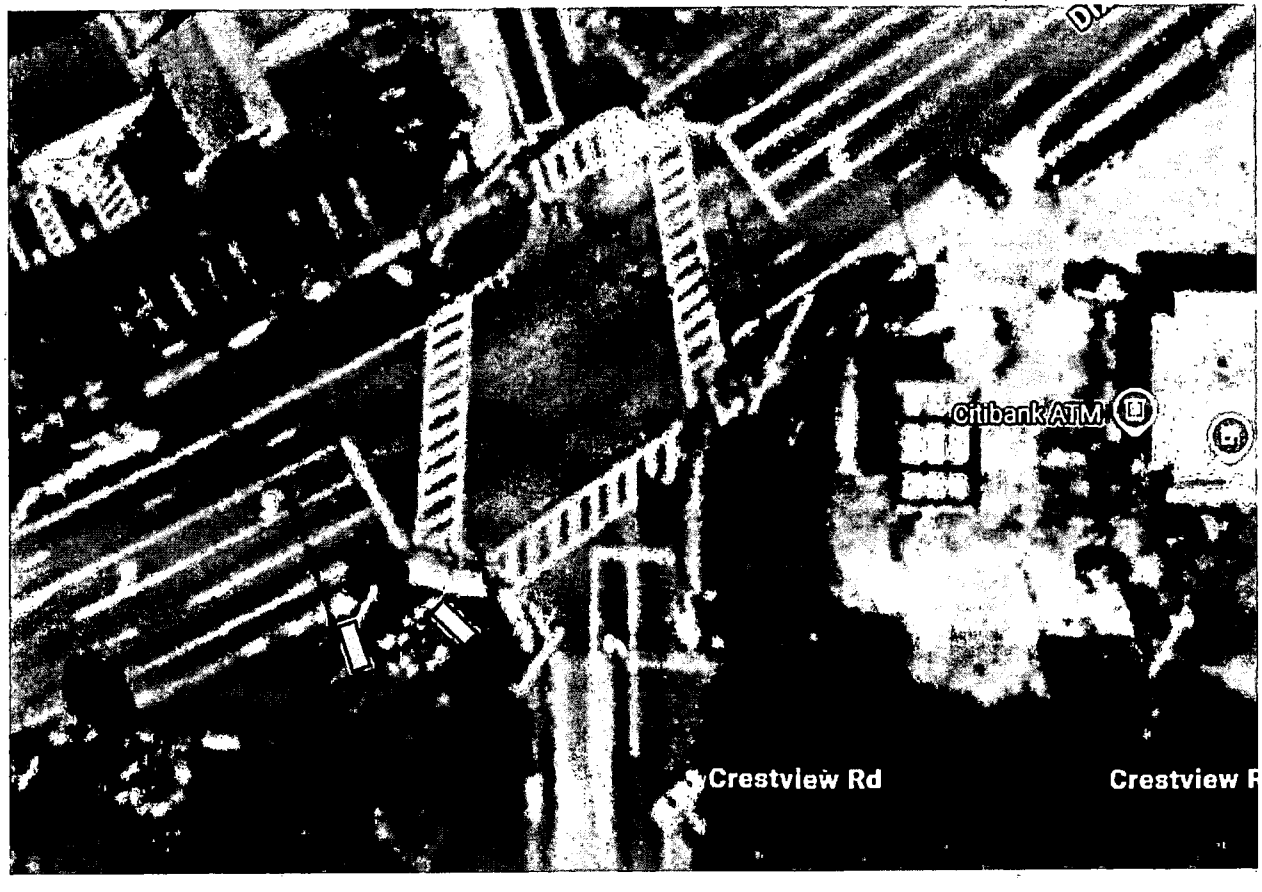
Economic Incentives/Grant Opportunities

- Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program
- UpStart Cocoa Small Business Development Program
- Commercial Façade Improvement Grants
- Community Contribution Tax Credit Program
- Opportunity Zones

LED Board at Helow Park

- Option 1: $60,370 for 2 single-sided signs
  - If positioned correctly should be able to be viewed from all 4 roads at the intersection
- Option 2: $42,719 for 1 double-sided sign
  - Would only be visible for 2 of the roads at the intersection.
- Estimated expense to run electric to the site ~$2,500
- The site would also need to be addressed for FPL to run electric to the site.

LED Board at Helow Park



Junny Rios Martinez Park

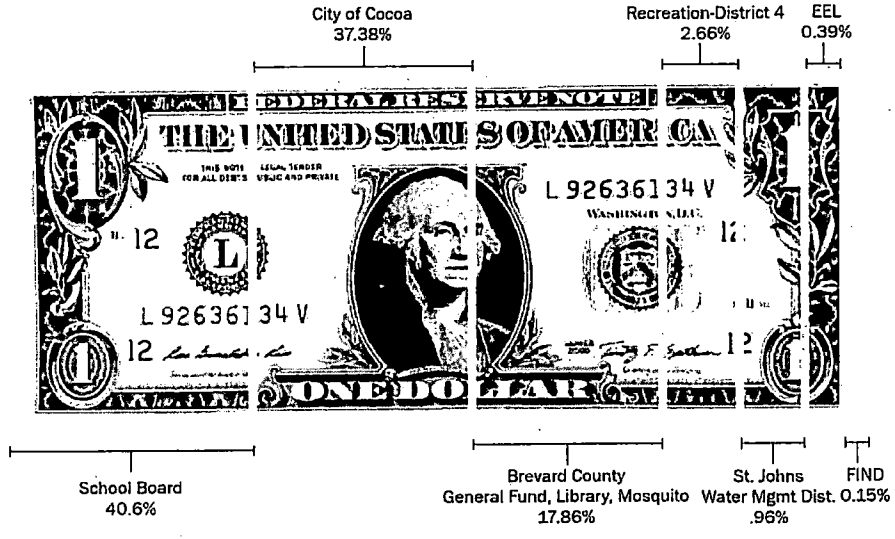
Estimated Expenses	
Exercise Trail Equipment and Installation	$65,500
BBQ Grills	$500
Playground Shade (not recommended by staff)	$31,000
Rubber mulch surfacing for Playground	$18,000
Total	$115,000

Property Tax Information

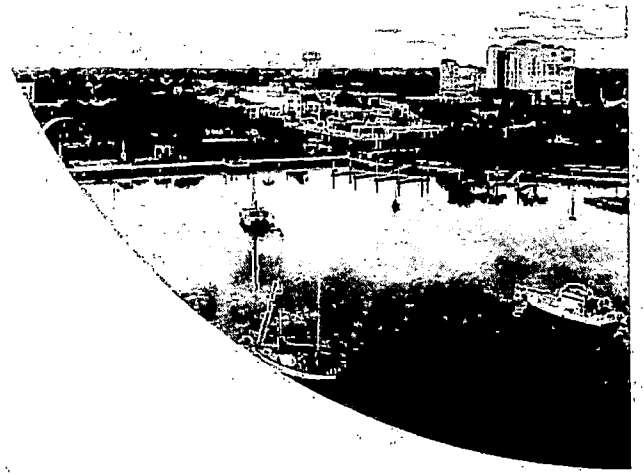
Over the last 10 years the City of Cocoa has seen an 11% growth.

Of every dollar collected in local property taxes, the City of Cocoa receives approximately 37%.

Property Taxes	
Ad Valorem Property Taxes	~$13m
Cocoa Police Department Budget	~$14m
Funded through other revenue sources	~$1m



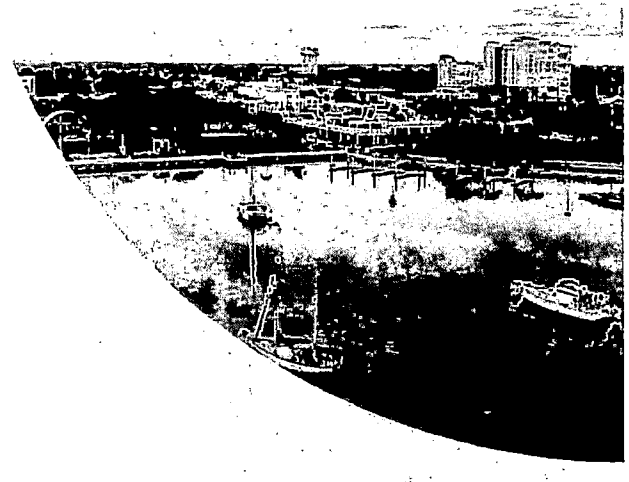
Unknown FY27 Financial Impacts



- Additional Homestead Exemption:
  - Legislative Proposal: Reduce the taxable value of your primary residence by $25,000 plus an additional exemption of $25,000 for properties valued over $50,000.
  - Federal/State Spending Cuts
  - Rebuilding the T-Docks and day slips
  - Brevard County Parks agreement actual costs for FY

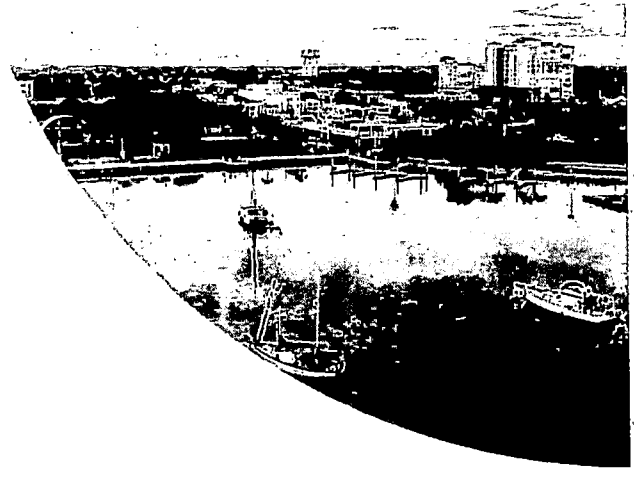
Property Tax (Estimates Due to Possible Legislative Changes)

FY2027 Budget Property Tax Scenarios	Impact
Homestead Properties (Property Tax Eliminated) Annually	($2,819,503)
Phased Elimination of Non-School Property Taxes for Homesteads, Increasing Homestead Exemption by 100K each year for 10 years - Year 1	($1,423,801)
Senior Citizen Exemption (Age 65+)	(Unknown)
Insurance-Linked Exemption (Additional $200,000 exemption on homestead properties covered by comprehensive multiperil property insurance)	(Unknown)

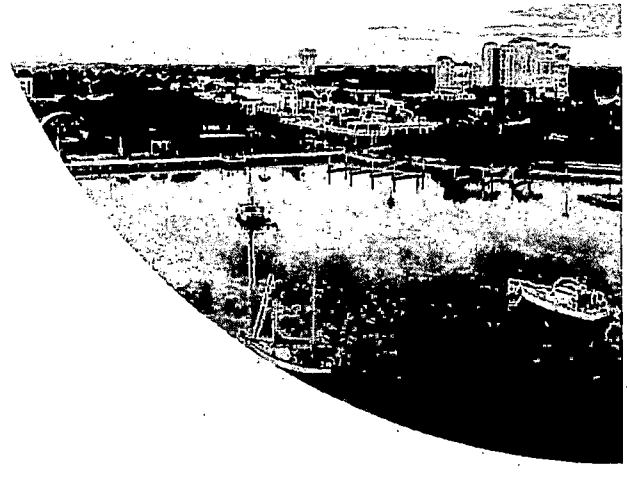


New Money (Estimates)

FY2027 Budget	
Fire Assessment 3%	$113,000
Utility/Stormwater Indirect Cost Allocation 5%	$440,600
Utility Return on Investment (ROI) 10%	$865,795
Estimated New Money	$1,419,395



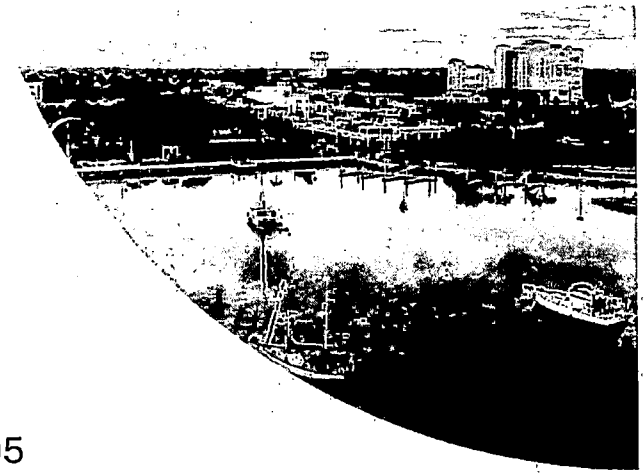
Increase in Expenses (Estimates)



FY2027 Budget	
General Fund Salaries (5 Unions and GF Staff)	$1,342,050
Medical Insurance 10%	$381,685
General Fund Utilities 5%	$59,756
General Fund Liability Insurance 5%	$49,917
General Fund Fuel 5%	$16,106
Estimated Expense Increase	$1,849,514

Estimated Shortfall ($430,119)

History of Fire Department Overtime



FY 2015 Overtime Original Budget - $22,500 vs. Actual Budget - $74,657
Shortfall - $52,157

FY 2020 Overtime Original Budget - $165,500 vs. Actual Budget - $182, 576
Shortfall - $17,076

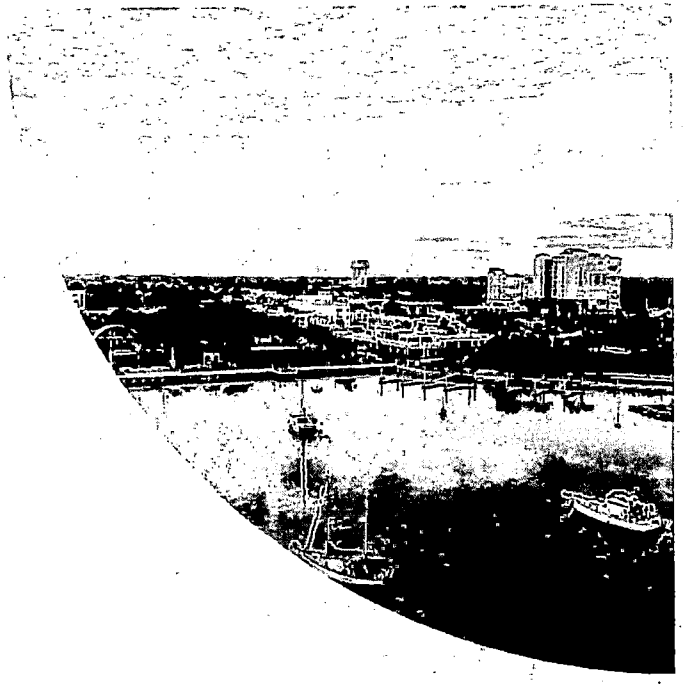
FY 2025 Overtime Original Budget $300,000 vs. Actual Budget - $687, 723
Shortfall - $387,723

FY 2026 Overtime Original Budget $300,000 vs. Projected Actuals - $731,805
Projected Shortfall - $431,805

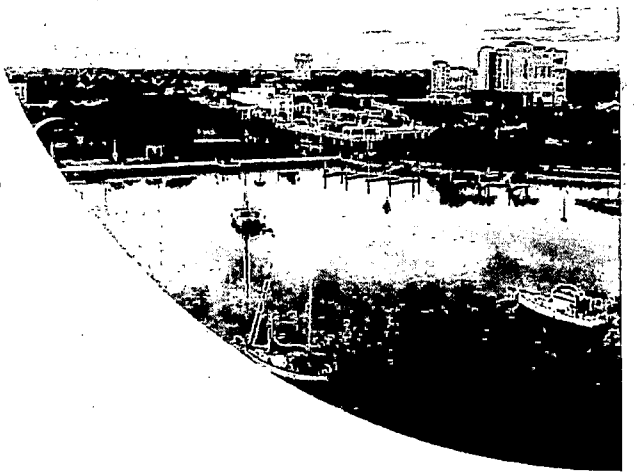
*Additional costs that come with the overtime include; FICA Taxes (7.65%), Workers Compensation (4.03%), and Retirement Contributions (54.16%)
Leading to additional personal services costs in FY 2026 of $278,688

Wage Increases

Group	FY26/27
LIUNA	7%
IAFF	7%
PBA R/F	8%
PBA Lt	Negotiate
Fire District Chiefs	Negotiate
General	7%



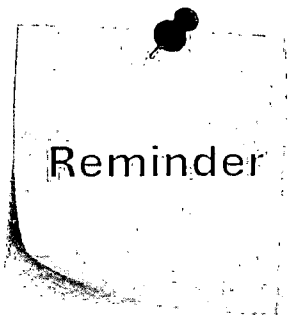
Public Safety Needs for a Growing Community



- Population increase due to new residential and commercial developments leads to demand for public safety personnel
  - Budgeting for one additional position each FY with anticipation for growth - Fire and Police (year 2 of additional positions)
  - Need for an additional Fire Station located in the northwest section of the city due to new development
  - Additional capital needs such as equipment, machinery and infrastructure (multi-million $ required)

Proactive investment to keep pace with growth

Code of Conduct



Resolution No. 2002-08
Section 1 Code of Conduct

a. The proper statutory and City Charter role of a City Council Member, as with any elected member of a legislative body, is to **act collectively**, not individually, to set and/or revise the City of Cocoa's governing policies and the City Manager and staff administer such policies.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES



COCOA
FLORIDA



















