



WILDWOOD CONNECTION

Millage Rate Trend



TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATE STAYS THE SAME: PROPOSED BUDGET CARRIES 2.8287

Wildwood’s city commission voted at its July 22, 2024, meeting to include the current 2.8287 millage rate in the budget for the new fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

This rate will be submitted to Sumter County’s property appraiser before the Aug. 4 deadline and will be included in the annual TRIM notice sent to property owners.

“You’ll be paying the same as last year if your property value has not increased,” said Mayor Ed Wolf. “I can’t think of anything else we pay the same for today as we did a year ago.”

While the 2.8287 millage rate is the same as that currently in effect, Florida state law defines it as a tax increase because it is higher than the rolled-back rate of 2.6499.

The rolled-back rate is “generally the amount of property taxes the property owner would owe if there were no change to the taxing authority’s budget” (floridarevenue.com). A technical description of how the rolled back rate is calculated can be found in Florida Statutes 200.065.

The FY 25 rate is a reduction of more than 22 percent compared to five years ago, when the adopted rate was 3.6580, and is nearly 30 percent less than in FY 18, when the adopted rate was 4.0184.

The millage rate decreases over time have been possible due to the overall growth of Wildwood and resulting increase in taxable property within city limits, combined with controlled spending and strategic planning.

As the city’s population and physical limits expand, so do demands on its government services. The new budget prioritizes infrastructure, including construction of a new wastewater treatment facility and other improvements to the city’s utilities.

The new wastewater treatment facility project is designed to add capacity in phases over time as demand grows. Developer impact fees fund a portion of the expansion, but state law limits Wildwood’s ability to raise those fees to provide all of the revenue needed.

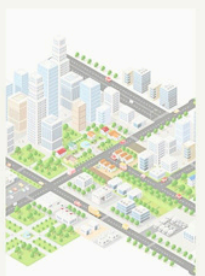
As a result, the commission approved rate increases to help cover the gap.

(continued on Page 2)

Taxable Value



Strategic Plan Implementation



- Community Engagement**
 - ❖ Millennium Park Construction
- Transportation**
 - ❖ Pavement Preservation
 - ❖ Jackson Street Improvements
 - ❖ Clay Drain Road Improvements
- Downtown Redevelopment**
 - ❖ Downtown Master Plan Implementation
- Infrastructure**
 - ❖ Wastewater Treatment Plant Project
 - ❖ Millennium Park Reuse Line
 - ❖ Stormwater Improvements
 - ❖ Regular Maintenance of Water and Wastewater Infrastructure
 - ❖ Odor Control Improvements
- Employee Recruitment/Retainment**
 - ❖ Expansion of Health Benefits

TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATE STAYS THE SAME: PROPOSED BUDGET CARRIES 2.8287

(continued from Page 1)

Based on a recommendation from the city's utility revenue sufficiency analysis consultant, the proposed FY 25 budget includes a 20 percent increase in wastewater and 5.3 percent increase in water rates, bringing the typical monthly bill for an average-volume Wildwood utility customer to a total charge that is approximately the average of surrounding service provider jurisdictions.

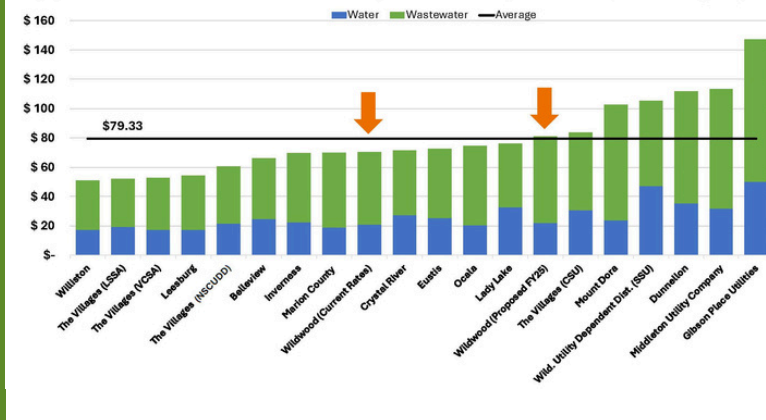
"Our elected officials work hard to prioritize citizen needs while moderating spending," explained Cassandra Smith, Wildwood's chief financial officer and assistant city manager. "Utility infrastructure is the top priority this year, and our team is seeking every potential grant opportunity, as well as other possible funding sources, to help mitigate the financial burden on our residents."

Six new positions in utilities have been incorporated into the budget, along with six additional police officers, four more parks and recreation staff, and one code compliance employee to assist the current staff of one.

Wildwood's city commission will discuss additional components of the proposed budget during a workshop on Aug. 19. The first public hearing on the FY 25 budget will occur Sept. 9, at 7 p.m. with the second public hearing and commission vote scheduled for Sept. 23, also at 7 p.m.

All commission workshops, meetings, and hearings are held at Wildwood City Hall, 100 N. Main St., and are open to the public. The public may participate during any public hearing shown on a meeting agenda and during the public forum session of commission meetings. Agendas can be found at wildwood-fl.gov no less than 72 hours before the commission convenes.

"Typical" Residential Monthly Bill Comparison (5,000 gal)



WILDWOOD PARKING ORDINANCE REVISED

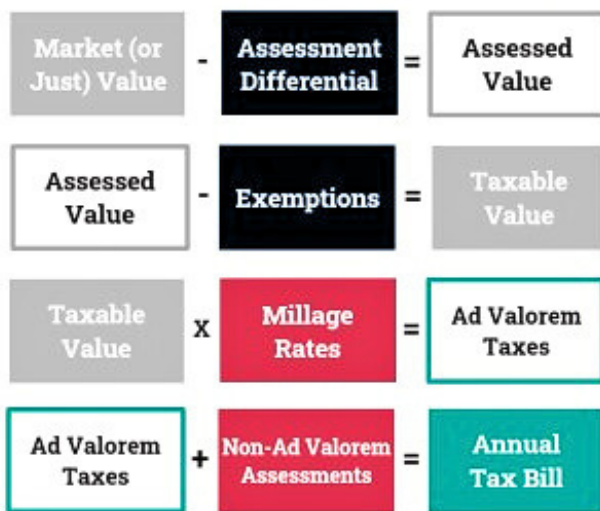
Wildwood's city commissioners approved revisions to the city's parking ordinance at their July 8, 2024, meeting, removing restrictions in some areas of the municipality.

"When the prior parking ordinance was adopted in 2020, restrictions were placed throughout the city," explained City Manager McHugh. "As Wildwood has grown, we have realized the need for those restrictions applied more to some areas than others."

The revised ordinance still bans stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle in or on any city road or street right-of-way located within the boundaries of The Villages® age-restricted development areas of Wildwood, and within the boundaries of the Oxford Oaks and Lakeside Landings subdivisions.

McHugh said officials retain the discretion to restrict on-street parking in other locations of the city if parking becomes a problem in those areas.

How Is a Tax Bill Calculated?



WILDWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT EARNS REACCREDITATION

After three days of evaluation, inspections, interviews, and scrutiny in March, Wildwood’s police department achieved reaccreditation this summer from the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

“It was a stressful few days, to be sure, but we passed with flying colors,” said Lt. Jennifer Hutchins, the department’s accreditation manager.

Evaluators examine more than 230 standards ranging from agency organization and fiscal activities to recruitment and training, records and evidence, use of force, criminal intelligence, and more.

Policies and procedures must be updated and in place to meet all required standards, which means continuous internal review, practice, and analysis. That ongoing exercise helps the department improve operations, enhance officer safety, and work more efficiently.

“Accreditation isn’t a once-every-three-years test,” explained Hutchins. “It’s an ongoing mindset, a department-wide culture, and a very high bar we meet every single day to stay in compliance and demonstrate in every way we are exactly who we say we are.”

Citing training, property, and evidence as some of the strictest, most detailed standards of the commission, Hutchins said they also are the areas in which Wildwood excels. She credits having the right people in the right places, with personnel who understand the importance of what they do and taking the utmost care to do it correctly every time.

Police Chief Randy Parmer agrees.

“We have worked hard to put together a strong team built with people who bring both passion and people skills, working exceptionally well together and with our community,” Parmer explained. “I am proud of our department, our culture, and our accomplishments.”

Accreditation not only helps instill public trust in Wildwood’s local law enforcement, it bolsters morale and works as an important recruitment tool.

“It definitely makes it easier for us to attract the best at every level of the organization,” Parmer added. “Whether it’s someone fresh from the academy or a detective with decades of experience, demonstrating we meet these high standards each day in everything we do gives us an advantage in a highly competitive labor market.”

Wildwood’s next reaccreditation is scheduled for 2027. Meanwhile, Hutchins says she is continuing to learn and grow after completing her second cycle of accreditation with the agency.

She will begin training this year to become an evaluator herself, explaining she expects to benefit from seeing how other agencies do things, bringing back additional best practices and new ideas to help Wildwood’s growing police department reach even greater heights of excellence.

“My goal is to achieve national recognition as an Advanced Law Enforcement agency,” Hutchins shared. “We may not get there next year. It’s one of the highest recognitions an agency can achieve, but I think it is within reach as long as we keep doing things the right way for the right reasons.”

Parmer concurred. “We may not be the biggest agency in numbers of personnel, but I believe there is no other police force in the country that has as much pride and passion for serving our citizens as Wildwood.”



Lt. Hutchins, above right, is assisted by Tina Perez, left, and Audrey Tanner, center, with the accreditation process.

Below, Chief Parmer, Captain Aaron Kinder, and the team accepting the official certificate at the ceremony in June.

Bottom, Chief Parmer and the accreditation team in front of Wildwood’s police station on CR 462E.



WILDWOOD SCHOOLS MAKE GREAT GRADES ON STATE'S REPORT CARDS

The Florida Department of Education's 2024 grades are in, and Wildwood's schools showed significant gains in academic performance.

Wildwood Elementary received an A grade, with Wildwood Middle High close behind, earning a B and helping Sumter County tie for fifth-best school district in the state, based on percentage of possible points achieved. The Villages Charter School, with a new campus located in Wildwood, maintained its longstanding A grade.

Mayor Ed Wolf, a former educator at Wildwood Middle School, said he is extremely pleased but not surprised.

"We have some amazing teachers, administrators, and coaches in our schools," he commented. "They care deeply about our kids and their futures. And we have great kids, who are listening and learning from these educators, working hard every day to take the knowledge they are offered and use it productively."

When asked what has changed since he retired from his career in education, Mayor Wolf laughed.

"Everything, honestly everything," he said. "I'm excited about Wildwood's growth and the opportunity it provides for these wonderful kids, who now have an opportunity to stay and put their education to use right here in their hometown."

To learn more about Florida's school grading system, visit <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability>.



HUEY STREET PROJECT CONTINUES

As utility, drainage system, and roadway improvements continue on Huey St., lane closures are expected until early November.

The entire road is not expected to be closed while school is in session, but construction delays may occur and motorists should allow extra time to travel through the area.

KEEP WILDWOOD BEAUTIFUL LAUNCHES COMMUNITY CLEANUP PROGRAM

Did You Know?

The City of Wildwood has achieved affiliation status with Keep America Beautiful.

Established in 1953, Keep America Beautiful provides programs and resources to help people end littering, improve recycling, beautify America's public spaces, and restore and support resilient communities.

Interested? Want to Get Involved?

One great way to get involved is to organize and host a Keep Wildwood Beautiful community cleanup event in your neighborhood.

A cleanup improves a neighborhood's appearance and boosts resident pride. It is a great way to build social bonds and have fun while getting fresh air and exercise. Cleaner neighborhoods are not only attractive but also offer greater curb appeal and strengthen property values. In other words, neighborhood cleanups provide a huge return on a small investment of time.

How Does It Work?

Organize a small-scale cleanup in your neighborhood around your own schedule and at your convenience, then contact the City of Wildwood for valuable resources.

The city will supply your team with gloves and trash bags for the cleanup. Wildwood also can loan your group long-handled garbage grabbers and can even collect your bags of trash in the public right-of-way after the event.

What Are the Details?

- Resources must be requested at least one week before your cleanup date. Supplies can be requested year-round, based on availability.
- The city can provide gloves and trash bags and a short-term loan of garbage grabbers. Grabbers must be returned no later than seven calendar days after the event.
- Reflector vests may be available on a case-by-case basis.

Contact Us:

City of Wildwood Code Compliance
 100 N. Main St., Wildwood, FL 34785
 CodeEnforcement@wildwood-fl.gov
 352-661-6067
 wildwood-fl.gov
 facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida



Fun For All Ages!

FAMILY FUN DAY

Join us at the Wildwood Community Center - Fun for All!
 Water Slides - Slip & Slide Kickball
 - Water Games - Food Trucks -
 More!

SATURDAY
AUGUST 3, 2024
10 A.M.-12 NOON
FREE ADMISSION

352-461-0134
 www.wildwood-fl.gov

6500 Powell Road
 Wildwood, FL 34785

WILDWOOD PARKS & RECREATION

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER

WITH UF / IFAS EXTENSION SUMTER COUNTY

Elementary school kids can interact and bond with nature, learn how to conserve our natural resources, and enjoy hands-on group and individual learning through this FREE international youth gardening program! Advance registration required.

SATURDAYS, 10:30 AM - 12:00 NOON
 WARFIELD AUDITORIUM, 98 S. WARFIELD AVE., WILDWOOD, FL 34785

SESSION 1
 Wildlife Gardener
 August 3 - August 31, 2024

SESSION 2
 Literature in the Garden
 September 7 - October 5, 2024

REGISTER:
 352-461-0134
 www.wildwood-fl.gov

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Find more activities and events on the city's community calendar at www.wildwood-fl.gov/calendar.

WILDWOOD POLICE EST. 1877

FREE Community Event includes lunch

Reserve your seat today!

The Wildwood Police Department Jurisdiction

SAFETY COALITION MEETING

— MEETING —
 Lunch 'n Learn series

Our next event is
Thursday, August 15, 2024
 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

ROCK OF AGES LUTHERAN CHURCH
 4957 East County Road 462
 Wildwood, FL 34785

To reserve your seat please email:
communityoutreach@wildwood-fl.gov

This is an ongoing Lunch 'n Learn series held bi-monthly at different locations and will include a different speaker and FREE Lunch. Come listen to a speaker!

Wildwood Police Department, 3939 County 462 East, Wildwood, FL 34785 (352) 330-1355

Wildwood PARKS AND RECREATION PRESENTS:

GIRLS' NIGHT OUT

at the Wildwood Community Center

August 17, 2024
 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
 Ages 21+
 Free admission

352-461-0134
 www.wildwood-fl.gov

6500 Powell Road
 Wildwood, FL 34785

Massages, facials, and makeover sessions available at additional cost.

Wine tasting, vendors, makeup demos, door prizes, and more. Bring your friends!

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Code Compliance

August 6, 2024
1:00 p.m.

Local Planning Agency

August 6, 2024
2:00 p.m.

Planning and Zoning

August 6, 2024
2:15 p.m.

City Commission

August 12, 2024
9:00 a.m.
August 19, 2024 (workshop)
9:00 a.m.
August 26, 2024
7:00 p.m.

Project Review Committee

August 13, 2024
10:00 a.m.

General Information

Unless otherwise specified, all meetings are held at City Hall, 100 N. Main St.

Agendas and minutes are posted on the city's website, www.wildwood-fl.gov. Click on the [Agenda](#) icon to view or download.

Meetings are open to the public. Attend in person or remotely by going to the city website and clicking on [Government > Attend a Meeting Virtually](#).

Anyone wishing to speak during Public Forum should submit a comment card before the meeting begins.



A LOOK AT WILDWOOD HISTORY

This photo shows the former Bill's Cafe on Main Street, north of City Hall. The date and photographer are unknown.

CHAT WITH A COMMISSIONER

MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 2024

12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.

Warfield Auditorium
98 S. Warfield Ave., Wildwood, FL 34785



Commissioner Flores will visit with members of the public. Ask questions, socialize, and/or just listen.

Reservations are not required or taken.

Attendees are invited to bring their own lunch or refreshments.



CITY INFORMATION

Commission

Ed Wolf
Mayor
ewolf@wildwood-fl.gov

Pamala Harrison-Bivins
Mayor Pro Tem
pbivins@wildwood-fl.gov

Joe Elliott
Commissioner
jelliott@wildwood-fl.gov

Marcos Flores
Commissioner
mflores@wildwood-fl.gov

Julian Green
Commissioner
jgreen@wildwood-fl.gov

City Hall

100 N. Main St.
Wildwood, FL 34785
352-330-1330
www.wildwood-fl.gov
facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida

Directory

City Manager
Jason McHugh
352-330-1332
jmchugh@wildwood-fl.gov

Development Services
352-330-1334

Human Resources
352-330-1340

Parks and Recreation
352-461-0134

Police (Non-Emergency)
352-330-1355

Police (Emergency)
911

Public Works
352-330-1343

Utilities
352-330-1336