

Charlotte County Breaks out numbers for beaches

Peter Ravella and his consulting team could not bring final figures to public workshops this week for what Manasota Key property owners and other taxpayers will pay for a beach re-nourishment.

The team has developed formulas that will allow island home and other property owners to calculate preliminary estimates of what they might pay into taxing units. Charlotte County hired Ravella's team to devise a funding methodology for long-term maintenance of the Gulf shoreline from Don Pedro Island north to the Sarasota-Charlotte county line on Manasota Key.

Consulting finance attorneys are still working with Ravella's team to determine how to assess restaurants and other commercial properties, condominium common areas and other miscellaneous properties on the barrier islands.

Basically, the funding strategy links three "freestanding" components:

1. The existing taxing unit for Don Pedro and Knight islands.
2. An existing taxing unit for Stump Pass management.
3. A new taxing unit for Manasota Key.

"You don't want to rob Peter to pay Paul, but you do want to have, in certain (emergency) circumstances, where Peter can borrow from Paul," Ravella said. "An integrated shoreline management overlay is important because it gives the county flexibility."

Calculating contributions

Ravella's team proposes a point system from which island properties could be assessed.

With the exclusion of commercial properties like restaurants, Gulf front assessments will be based upon one point per every 10th of an acre of a property's lot size, plus one point for every 10 feet of Gulf beach front. They multiply that by the number of residential or rental units on the property.

Gulf-front property owners will also pay a recreational component per residential unit in their assessments. Other islanders — those whose properties don't front on the Gulf — also will pay a recreational component per residential unit.

These properties may not be on the beach, but have easy access to it.

On Knight and Don Pedro islands, only Gulf front property owners are now paying into a taxing unit. They pay \$15.71 per linear foot fronting on the Gulf. That will change with all islanders contributing into the taxing unit.

For the Gulf-front Knight and Don Pedro taxing unit, one point equates to \$92, plus or minus \$25. The recreational component on Knight and Don Pedro islands is \$165 per residential or rental unit, plus or minus \$25.

On Manasota Key, a point equals \$200, plus or minus \$25. The recreational unit is estimated at \$215 per unit, plus or minus \$25.

The county will add \$1.65 million annually as a "countywide contribution" that will match what island property owners contribute into the two taxing units.

All of West County property owners pay into a taxing unit for the maintenance of Stump Pass — \$19 per \$100,000 of taxable value. They will continue to pay into the taxing unit for Stump Pass. The "countywide" contribution is already collected through county tourist tax, state boating fees and West Coast Inland Navigation District funds.

Any taxing strategy will need final approval from county commissioners, and no assessments will appear on tax bills until the commission gives those approvals.

Other funding

The ultimate goal is to raise \$4.2 million annually in local funding for beach renourishment — but local property owners aren't the only ones who will help maintain the Gulf shoreline.

The county and its consultants remain confident that the county could garner from the state as much as 39 percent for the costs of a beach nourishment project.

Actual beach renourishment isn't expected until the winter of 2019, according to the county's website. The county now plans to renourish the Gulf shoreline every eight years.

The first Manasota Key beach renourishment will cost more than \$21.3 million, but that includes \$7 million or more to mitigate a stretch of exposed rock "hard bottom," which will be a one-time cost.

For more information, visit "Manasota Key North Beach Erosion Project" under Project Status on the county website at www.charlottecountyfl.gov.

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