

# INSIDER

## CITIZEN NEWSLETTER

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### How Reduced Property Tax Revenue May Affect Residents

Now that voters across the state have voted in favor of reducing property taxes they pay, the big question is how will City of Winter Haven residents be affected?

More than 64 percent of voters said "Yes" to Amendment One, so the City is expected to lose \$810,000 to \$1 million in property tax revenue. That's in addition to \$2.2 million lost when state legislators approved the first phase of Property Tax Reform. Our number one goal is to continue to provide City residents with the best services possible. That includes police, fire utility services, solid waste collection and recreational activities.

Throughout the process of property tax reform, the City has been dedicated to preserving service levels and quality while also minimizing operating costs. Proper and proactive planning on the part of the City favorably positioned the City of Winter Haven to absorb the property tax revenue shortfalls incurred over the past year. The City was projected to save \$2.7 million through its Property Tax Reform Recovery plan by eliminating vacant positions, reducing overtime, reducing hours of operation at some facilities, reducing funding for the Environmental Lands Program and cutting back donations to community-based programs. The City has also more closely scrutinized other costs such as membership and subscription expenses and modifying fleet inventory. All told, the City expects to save \$3.2 million. That's still not enough, however.

Florida residents are demanding an even greater return on their investment, premium services at the same or a reduced cost and increased government accountability, suggesting that property tax reform is the first of many budget constrictive mandates city and county governments may encounter in the future. That means we will have to do more with less, City Manager David Greene has said. Other than cutting annual costs, our goal is for residents not to notice much change at all. That may not continue to be possible. Staff is striving to find new ways to improve efficiency so that major service reductions will not be required. Some divisions have already been switched from five eight-hour days to four 10-hour days, all in an effort to be more productive and efficient.

Something that will ultimately have a tremendous impact and help make the blow of reduced revenue a little easier to bear is the planned intermodal facility on 318 acres Evansville Western Railway, Inc., a CSX Transportation, Inc. affiliate, recently purchased from the City of Winter Haven.

A second 930-acre development planned adjacent to the intermodal facility will be a commerce park to complete the plan for an Integrated Logistics Center (ILC). Modern intermodal facilities are designed to quickly move containers, automobiles and other goods to and from trucks and rail. These facilities are efficient, environmentally friendly and a positive source of economic development.

The ILC will also become home to secondary businesses interested in locating close to the intermodal facility to reduce transportation expenses and enhance efficiency.

The intermodal facility is expected to create more than 100 jobs that are expected to pay an average \$64,000 a year, including benefits. Another 2,000 people are expected to be employed to work in up to 5 million square feet of warehouse, industrial and office space planned for the ILC; and about 6,000 people may be employed in other businesses around Polk County as a result of the overall development. Over a 10-year build-out period, the entire facility is projected to have a \$10 billion economic impact and infuse more than \$900 million into local, state and federal tax revenues.

The intermodal facility is undergoing a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) review by the Florida Department of Community Affairs and various local, state and federal agencies. The process is expected to be completed later this year.

It is growth and exceptional economic development opportunities such as this integrated logistics center that will help keep tax rates as low as possible for all City residents. As everyone adapts to all the changes that will occur, the future of the City of Winter Haven remains bright.

### Stroll for Art's Sake



Albert Kriston's "Reach" is the first sculpture by a Winter Haven artist to be featured in the Florida Outdoor Sculpture Competition. In a partnership with Polk Museum of Art, the City will display 10 pieces, chosen from 44 works submitted. The sculptures will be displayed in Central Park for one year. Vote for your favorite piece during the 2008 Central Park Stroll, April 10 from 5-8 p.m.

## It's a Drought, Conserve



Did you know outdoor water use accounts for more than half of all water consumed by households? Did you know Central Florida is currently going through a drought, an abnormally dry period, prolonged by a lack of rainfall, causing a hydrologic imbalance? By tightening taps, eliminating leaks and using water wisely, we can all help conserve.

That's true especially when it comes to lawn irrigation. Did you know irrigation is currently restricted to only one day each week? Don't water just because it's your day. Irrigate your lawn when it shows signs of stress from lack of water, including when it turns a bluish-gray color, footprints linger and leaf blades are folded in half lengthwise. Install a soil moisture sensor to turn on your irrigation system only when water is needed.

## When Can I Water?

If your house number ends in...

- 0 or 1, water only on Monday
- 2 or 3, water only on Tuesday
- 4 or 5, water only on Wednesday
- 6 or 7, water only on Thursday
- 8 or 9\*, water only on Friday

\*and locations with no discernible address.

For more information, visit the Southwest Florida Water Management District website at: [www.watermatters.org](http://www.watermatters.org)

## In the Summertime...

Make plans now to participate in summer recreation programs offered by the City of Winter Haven. For more information, call the Leisure Services Division, at 291-5656. Proof of residency is required at registration.

**Swim Lessons**, two-week sessions begin June 9. Classes will be offered for all ability levels. The cost for each session is \$35 for City residents and \$50 for non-residents.

**Summer Day Camp**, for children who have finished first grade through age 14, will be held at the Chain O' Lakes Complex and Winter Haven Recreation and Cultural Center. This year's camps will focus on enriching children's minds and health. Children may participate in one or two four-week sessions June 9 - July 3 and July 7 - Aug. 1. Registration begins at 9 a.m. April 5 for City residents; and April 12 for non-residents. The camp cost has not yet been determined.

**Rotary Park Playground Program**, for City residents only June 9 through Aug. 1. The cost for the eight-week program is \$40, including lunch. Registration begins May 12 at 6 p.m.

## Hurricane Preparation

Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 7, for the Polk County Hurricane Expo 2008. Be prepared before the next hurricane visits our area. The event will include disaster preparedness seminars, power tool safety demonstrations, children's activities, exhibits, local experts and meteorologists, concessions and more. The time is 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Orange Dome, 210 Cypress Gardens Blvd. For more information, visit [www.polk-county.net/hurricaneexpo](http://www.polk-county.net/hurricaneexpo).

## Library Events

Don't miss the many events and activities at the Winter Haven Public Library, at the corner of Avenue A and Fourth Street Northwest, in downtown Winter Haven.

**Florida Library Youth Program**, June 9, 10 a.m., five-week summer program begins with a goal of encouraging Florida children to become lifelong readers and library users.

**Preschool Story Hour**, each Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 a.m., in the Children's Dept. (September-April)

**Poetry Live!**, 6:30 p.m., third Tuesday, in the Multi Purpose Room, recite original poetry or that of your favorite poet. (August-April)

**Saturday Afternoon at the Movies**, 2 p.m., second and fourth Saturdays, in the Multi Purpose Room.

**Winter Haven Heritage Writers Group**, first Wednesday, 10 a.m., Multi Purpose Room, explore Winter Haven history through personal memoirs and shared stories while creating a community scrapbook.

## Trail Dedication

The 3.2-mile Chain of Lakes Trail is open. The \$2.8 million Rails-to-Trails project stretches from downtown to Lake Alfred. Take a stroll, a jog or a bicycle ride on our beautiful new trail today. The trail is equipped with "Code Blue" emergency-aid boxes and "Friends of the Trail" volunteers will patrol the trail. Two new trailheads will soon be constructed.



## April, May and June Special Events

<b>Sunset Celebration</b>	Lake Howard	April 5, 4 - 8 p.m.
<b>Central Park Stroll</b>	Central Park	April 10, 5 - 8 p.m.; 2008 Florida Outdoor Sculpture Competition
<b>Hurricane Expo</b>	Orange Dome	June 7, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
<b>Pickin' in the Park</b>	Central Park	First Friday of every month; 6:30 - 8 p.m. (September - May)
<b>Cruisin' Winter Haven</b>	Downtown	First Saturday of every month; 4 - 9 p.m.
<b>Rhythms of Life</b>	Central Park	Second Sunday of every month; 2 - 3:30 p.m.
<b>Jammin' in the Park</b>	Central Park	Third Friday of every month; 6:30 - 8 p.m. (September - May)

The Winter Haven Insider is a City of Winter Haven publication intended to inform area residents and businesses. If you have any questions or comments, please call 863-291-5600, or write Joy Townsend, editor, at 451 Third St. NW, Winter Haven, FL 33883, or email at [jtowndsend@mywinterhaven.com](mailto:jtowndsend@mywinterhaven.com).