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The Property Tax Amendment and Water Infrastructure

HJR 1F on the November 3 ballot would raise the non-school homestead exemption to \$150,000 in 2027 and \$250,000 in 2028, which county leadership estimates could cut the county budget by roughly \$50 million once fully in place. Do you support this amendment? If it passes, how do you expect the revenue reduction to affect the county's support for water utilities, Lagoon monitoring, and water quality improvement projects? If you intend to protect those water programs, how specifically would you make up the shortfall, and which other services or staff positions would you reduce?

I support meaningful property tax relief and reform, but I do not believe that this amendment will have that intended result. My concern is that taxes will be shifted to non-ad valorem assessment, user fees or other regressive measures. If passed, the county should undertake a review of current spending and projects. Focus first on cutting non-essential spending, protect core public safety services and prioritize long-term essential projects. Our water and utility infrastructure are high priority items.

Questions Sponsored by:



Sustaining Restoration Under Funding Pressure

Much of our local restoration relies on layered and non-guaranteed outside funding (EPA National Estuary Program dollars, competitive NOAA grants, the state Indian River Lagoon Protection Program, and water management district contributions). If state and federal funding are severely cut, how will you keep research and restoration moving for the Indian River Lagoon ? Would you support a dedicated, recurring county funding source to insulate these projects from state or federal shortfalls?

The Indian River Lagoon is one of our county's greatest natural assets, and protecting it should remain a priority. I support continuing restoration efforts and aggressively pursuing available state, federal, and private funding opportunities whenever possible.

If outside funding is reduced, the County should evaluate its overall budget and prioritize projects that provide measurable improvements to water quality. I would be cautious about creating a new dedicated recurring funding source without first reviewing existing revenues, spending priorities, and long-term financial obligations.

Understanding Our Local Waters

The St. Johns River Water Management District's 2025 monitoring showed a significant rebound in Lagoon seagrass coverage after years of decline. What is your understanding of the current water quality issues facing the Indian River Lagoon and Blue Cypress Lake, and do you read the recent seagrass recovery as a reason to sustain current spending and effort, or to ease off? Beyond funding, what concrete county-level measures would you champion to restore and maintain the health of both water bodies?

The recent seagrass recovery is encouraging and demonstrates that sustained restoration efforts can produce real results. We should continue investing in projects that produce measurable improvements to water quality while regularly evaluating their effectiveness.

At the county level, I support continuing septic-to-sewer conversions where appropriate, improving stormwater management, maintaining and upgrading water infrastructure, restoring shorelines and habitats, and working closely with our municipalities, the Water Management District, and state agencies. Protecting the Lagoon and Blue Cypress Lake is an investment in our environment, economy, and quality of life.

Future Water Supply and Utility Expansion

What is your assessment of Indian River County's long-term potable water supply, and how do our existing and expected future utility operations (both wastewater and potable) affect the county's overall water resources? What specific expansion of county utilities do you believe is necessary both to meet future demand and to restore our water resources, including the planned connection of legacy septic systems to central sewer?

The County must continue investing in water and wastewater infrastructure to meet future demand while protecting our natural resources. I support expanding utilities where appropriate, including septic-to-sewer conversions in priority areas, because these projects improve water quality, protect public health, and support responsible growth.

Annexation and City–County Collaboration

The recent Sebastian Pines and Cresswind annexations approved roughly 1,512 homes on former agricultural land. Because Sebastian operates no water or wastewater utility of its own, both developments will rely entirely on the county's system under an interlocal agreement. How will you navigate situations where a city approves major density increases that the county is ultimately responsible for serving? Do you believe the current interlocal agreements give the county enough leverage, and if not, what specific changes would you pursue? Where else do you see tangible opportunities for the cities and county to work together?

Whenever the County is responsible for providing major infrastructure, there should be early and meaningful coordination between the County and municipalities so that capacity, timing, costs, and long-term impacts are fully understood before major development decisions are made. Good planning protects taxpayers, supports responsible growth, and ensures infrastructure keeps pace with development. I support strong partnerships and interlocal agreements that promote collaboration, shared planning, and accountability for the benefit of all county residents.