



TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH AGENDA MEMORANDUM

MEETING TYPE: Town Commission Meeting

MEETING DATE December 3, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Town Manager's Office

SUBJECT: Referendum for Public Safety Projects – March 11, 2025

SUMMARY:

Over the past several months, the Town Commission has actively discussed its strategic priorities, the capital improvement plan, and the 5-year financial forecast. Through this process, two public safety projects have emerged as high priorities due to their critical role in supporting Town operations, improving residents' quality of life, and ensuring public safety.

These projects are:

Rehabilitation of the Old Fire Station and Apparatus Bays: Modernizing these facilities will address structural and operational deficiencies, ensuring they continue to serve the community effectively.

Construction of a Public Safety Docking Facility: Establishing this facility is vital for marine unit docking and enhancing water rescue response capabilities.

These projects aim to improve public safety operations, increase efficiency, preserve critical infrastructure, and enhance response services.

Town staff have collaborated with design professionals to develop cost-effective, long-term designs that meet the projects' goals. During this process, it became apparent that the cost of each project may exceed the expenditure limit set by Section 2.01(30) of the Town Charter. This section requires voter approval for expenditures exceeding \$900,000 (adjusted for inflation) in a single fiscal year for any individual or combined projects.

To ensure compliance with the Town Charter and transparency with residents, Resolution No. 2024-034 (attached) calls for a referendum to authorize up to \$3,000,000 in expenditures for the two projects. The referendum would be scheduled for March 11, 2025 if authorized and will allow the qualified voters of Highland Beach to decide on this important investment in public safety infrastructure. The referendum language does not require any borrowing or financing provisions as neither are required to complete the projects.

The Town Commission's proactive efforts to align these projects with strategic priorities highlight their importance to public safety and infrastructure resilience. While staff remain committed to pursuing grants and alternative funding sources, the Town must be prepared to

meet potential grant-matching obligations. Authorizing the referendum demonstrates a seriousness of purpose and ensures readiness to proceed with these critical initiatives. Staff recommends adopting Resolution No. 2024-034 to initiate the referendum process. This approach not only aligns with the Town Charter's requirements but also fosters public engagement and transparency in decision-making. Upon adoption, the Town Clerk will coordinate with the Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections to finalize referendum logistics and publish the required notices.

The Town Commission's approval of this resolution will pave the way for advancing these essential public safety projects, ensuring that Highland Beach is prepared to meet the needs of its residents effectively and efficiently.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Capital Budget (No Financing)

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution No. 2024-034

RECOMMENDATION:

Commission review and authorization.