

Water-related issues top KCB agenda

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KEY COLONY BEACH — The Key Colony Beach City Commission continued its focus on water treatment June 12 and approved a contract with LPS Utilities of Key Colony Beach for the Seventh Street and Shelter Drive drainage project for roughly \$483,000.

Of the three bids received, LPS's bid was the lowest. The task will help control stormwater runoff and remove potential contaminants. At last month's meeting, the city had a lengthy stormwater assessments discussion and decided to assess commercial properties a flat fee of \$80, which was the same fee as residences.

The commission also approved paying \$24,440 to Affordable Asphalt, the low bid of two received, to pave the Seventh Street parking lot.

The commission then approved the dates for the city's 2025-2026 annual budget meetings, which requires public hearings. Workshops are set for July 10 and July 15 with approval of the proposed millage or property tax rate expected on July 17. Monroe County requested municipalities submit their millage rates before its July 22 meeting in order for them to be recorded prior to the county sending out annual tax assessments.

The city also amended its wastewater collection ordinance by increasing the minimum commercial account bill to \$71 per month per 100 gallons of water used effective Oct. 1, 2025. This ordinance will come back before the commission one more time for final approval.

In the department reports, the parks and recreation director said the basketball court at the tennis court site had been installed.

Next month, the city expects to have the new city hall drawings come back to the commission for approval. The commission is slated to meet on July 17. By then, the state's allocations of stewardship funds should be available and the city is hoping to receive grant funds for several capital projects. Monroe County is expected to receive about \$20 million to be split among eight entities within the county, including the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority, in accordance with project requests.

The city also approved a resolution supporting the potential solution list

of projects within the approved the countywide U.S. 1 Transportation Master Plan. Its goal is to improve traffic flow, alleviate congestion, improve safety and assist in improving the level of service on U.S. 1.

Commissioner Tom DiFransico requested the purchase of a "Ranger" vehicle be removed from consent for clarification. The commission approved the purchase of a Polaris golf cart for the building department rather than another vehicle such as a \$60,000 pickup truck.

"Any time after a storm, we're driving carts, not a vehicle," Mayor Freddie Foster said. "The city can put a front and back hitch on it for a city employee to help move trailers. Even for parking, it's convenient (due to its smaller parking space requirements)."

The fire chief shared the department had procured a safe boat with an aluminum hull to be deployed out of city marina. It was \$476,000 and the city had a \$150,000 grant to put toward the purchase.

Staff shared the city's golf course professional has signed a three-month contract that will be formalized once the city moves forward with a long-term plan for the city's golf course.

City Manager John Bartus reported the city is monitoring budget discussions in Tallahassee.

"Tourism funds are safe," he said. "They're looking at alternatives to property taxes and addressing tourist taxes. We need to have a line item in our budget that allows us to ask for more money. I'll also check when terms are up (on county boards) for information on next appointment opportunities."

Bartus served on the county's District 3 tourism advisory board representing the Middle Keys. The Monroe County Commission appoints these members.

"Some have to be tourism-related; others can be at-large so that would be (our) avenue," he said.

Foster wanted to pursue additional grants for the city.

"Marathon gets \$250,000 (from state grant funds) yearly to rake their beaches. They have a grant to clean their bathrooms available to tourists," he said.

The process gets easier, he added. "Once granted, (the allocation) can be repetitive in the yearly (grant) cycle."

