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PALM BEACH GARDENS

Palm Beach Gardens' \$236M budget cuts property tax rate, adds 39 new city employees

Most of the new employees will staff a sixth city fire-rescue station near the Avenir development along Northlake Boulevard.

Lianna Norman Palm Beach Post

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PALM BEACH GARDENS — Spending in the city of Palm Beach Gardens is increasing by 8.5 percent this fiscal year, which started on Saturday, under a \$236 million budget.

The Palm Beach Gardens City Council unanimously voted Sept. 22 to reduce property taxes by about 4% to help soften the blow of property values rising throughout Palm Beach County.

The city is reducing its property tax rate to \$5.32 per \$1,000 of assessed value, down from \$5.55. Most homeowners with homesteaded properties will see a slight reduction in property taxes, city officials said.

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The largest expense in the city's budget is earmarked for personnel due to an impending wave of new positions.

Palm Beach Gardens is in the design and planning phase of its sixth fire station this year, located near the city's new Avenir community off western Northlake Boulevard. The city will hire and train 21 new firefighters this year to fill out all six stations.

Other departments such as recreation and police will also add jobs for a total of 39 new full-time positions. These additions will bring the city up to 596 full-time employees.

Budget breakdown

- Under its general expenses, the city will spend about \$33.9 million on its fire department and \$33.6 million on police.
- The \$100 million designated to personnel expenses will go to salaries, taxes, retirement, insurance, workers' compensation and unemployment.
- About \$40 million in operating expenses will cover professional services such as accounting, auditing, legal and engineering, training and education, repairs and maintenance.
- Capital outlay expenses will cost the city \$6.7 million and be put toward construction projects, machinery and equipment.