



**N E W S   F O R   I M M E D I A T E   R E L E A S E**

**COUNTY MANAGER DINNEEN PRESENTS COUNTY COUNCIL WITH  
RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR 2009-10**

Volusia County Manager Jim Dinneen has presented the Volusia County Council with a \$617.7 million proposed overall budget to fund the operations of county government for the fiscal year that begins October 1.

The proposed budget calls for a general fund property tax rate of \$5.44 per \$1,000 of taxable property value – equal to the rollback rate. The rollback tax rate produces the same amount of revenue as the current budget year. Together the five tax rates levied countywide total \$6.45 per \$1,000 of taxable property value, also equal to the rollback rate. Because of a 17 percent drop in the tax base due to falling property values in the county, it takes a rollback rate that's \$1.05 higher than this year's adopted countywide rates to produce the same amount of money to fund the services county government provides across the county.

"We have a duty to protect and take care of the basic needs of our citizens, especially those that are the most vulnerable," said Dinneen. "Further property tax reductions can not be made without severely impacting services."

Dinneen said his proposed budget contains no increase in spending, as was the case in the current budget. "We started downsizing three years ago and that will continue in the next budget year."

Dinneen's recommended budget of \$617.7 million is \$16.7 million lower than the budget adopted for the current fiscal year. Property taxes for all funds account for \$231.7 million of Dinneen's recommended budget, a decrease of about \$3 million from the 2008-09 adopted budget.

"The County Council's actions for the past three fiscal years, coupled with this proposed budget, will result in \$147 million in tax savings to the citizens and have reduced the organization by 72 fulltime and 91 parttime positions," Dinneen states in his budget message to the County Council. "In addition, we have placed 28 positions in transition funding to be deleted over time and we have left another 56 positions unfunded for fiscal year 2009-10."

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The county's core services (47 percent of the total budget), such as the sheriff, jail, beach, judicial system, health, human services, and parks and recreation, are paid through the general fund. The general fund, library fund and voter-approved Volusia Forever and ECHO programs receive 81 percent of the property tax revenue the county collects.

"Rollback rates do not recognize the inflationary cost increases of goods and services," Dinneen said. "We're again absorbing normal cost increases through prudent planning, sound management and the organization working as a team. Our government's documented cost index is a growth in operations of about 7 percent annually."

The County Manager said that while the economic downturn has caused a sharp reduction in many of the revenues the county relies on to fund services, citizen demand for county services has increased. "We're experiencing a considerably higher number of people seeking social services, which you might expect with this economy. But we're also experiencing significant increases in our parks, libraries and the beach because people are staying home and availing themselves of local amenities."

Dinneen pointed out that Volusia County was ahead of the Legislature-mandated property tax reductions. "The Volusia County Council has been very proactive in recognizing the need for property tax relief. That's why I think it's reasonable to recommend rollback tax rates."

Dinneen is recommending a \$1.3 million reduction in the county's fire budget. The reduction is largely the result of savings achieved through a new fire response model that requires fewer personnel. The model is based on a two-person minimum staffing of the stations with additional manpower provided by regional hub stations. The reduction in the fire budget will offset a hike in the tax rate for the county's municipal services district budget which has been affected by falling revenues as a result of the economic downturn. The county municipal services district budget finances the services the county provides only to unincorporated Volusia residents, the largest of those services being patrols by the Sheriff's Office.

There are few new or expanded programs or capital projects in the recommended budget. The major capital project being recommended is \$10 million to address jail overcrowding and aging facilities.

The County Council's two required budget hearings are September 3 and 17.