



# FAQs

## FY 2023-2024 City Budget

### Investing Today For Bartow's Tomorrow

Updated August 30, 2023

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#### **What should I know about the City of Bartow's proposed 2023-2024 budget?**

The City of Bartow has always made it a priority to be a responsible steward of public resources for the families and businesses that call Bartow home. Always fiscally conservative, the City is in a stable financial position with a healthy amount of cash reserves.

Over the years, however, building these reserves has come at a cost:

- Savings from years of postponing maintenance and avoiding replacement of key facilities have resulted in critical infrastructure that is beyond its serviceable life. This risks failure and threatens public health and safety.
- Salaries and benefits for City employees are not competitive with surrounding Polk County cities. This hinders the City's ability to attract and retain talented professionals.

In its 2023-2024 budget, the City Commission is considering a budget and property tax adjustment to Invest Today for Bartow's Tomorrow.

#### **What funding priorities are under consideration?**

Some of the most critical needs the City Commission is considering include:

- Analyzing options to provide a pool amenity and aquatics program where children learn to swim and where families can play and cool off outside
- Repairing and replacing infrastructure at other Parks and Recreation facilities to make them beautiful amenities where people want to gather and build community
- Building a Fire Department Substation to reduce response times and improve public safety
- Centralizing Public Works / Solid Waste / Fleet buildings to eliminate current unsafe conditions and take advantage of economies of scale
- Funding a series of technology upgrades to improve the quality, efficiency, and value of City services
- Funding a variety of preventative maintenance best practices, such as the sanitary sewer inspection program, to extend infrastructure lifespan and avoid costly service interruptions and replacement
- Prioritizing the City's pavement resurfacing program for improved streets and sewer rehabilitation to ensure overflows are prevented
- Adding critical hourly and salaried positions to enhance customer service, improve public safety, and ensure cleaner and safer neighborhoods
- Introducing an across-the-board salary and benefits adjustment to counter high inflation making the City more competitive in attracting and maintaining talent
- Keeping our business community strong by continuing funding for critical community nonprofits like Bartow Economic Development Council, Bartow Chamber of Commerce and Mainstreet Bartow Inc.

## How does the City plan to pay for the budget increase?

Some say that for years, the City has been saving up money for use when the need arrives. After years of scrimping and saving, the time has come to use some funds to reinvest in our community.

Under the current proposal, the City will fund the budget increase in a couple of ways – first, it will draw down current cash reserves to fund much needed capital improvements. Even after this, the City will have ample reserves in the bank to respond to emergencies.

The City is proposing increasing the property tax millage rate from 4.6080 to 6.1080. This increase compares favorably to neighboring communities. At the 6.1080 rate, the City would have the fifth lowest millage rate of all cities in Polk County.

## How do millage rates work?

Millage rates are property taxes that support key City activities, including public safety, parks and recreation, libraries, and other operations. They are calculated using the assessed value of the property, multiplied by the millage rate, and then divided by 1,000 to determine how much tax must be paid. The assessed value is determined after homestead exemptions are applied, which in the State of Florida are significant. There are several exemptions for senior citizens and veterans. Additionally, each State of Florida resident receives the first and third \$25,000 of assessed value as a property tax exemption.

Currently, the City's millage rate is 4.6080, and the City Commission is considering raising that to 6.1080. Below are several examples of the impact of this proposed change on a variety of property values:

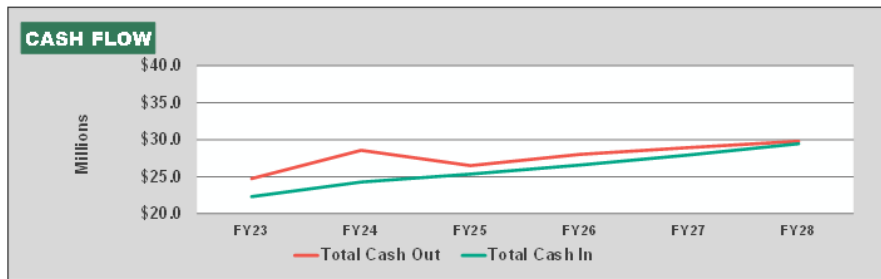
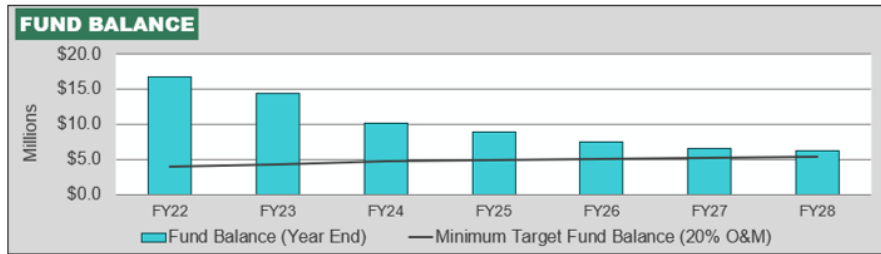
Current Millage Rate (4.608)						
Assessed Value	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$500,000
Millage Rate	0.004608	0.004608	0.004608	0.004608	0.004608	0.004608
Property Tax	\$345.60	\$691.20	\$921.60	\$1,382.40	\$1,843.20	\$2,304.00
1.5 Millage Rate Increase to 6.108						
Assessed Value*	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$500,000
Millage Rate	0.006108	0.006108	0.006108	0.006108	0.006108	0.006108
Property Tax	\$458.10	\$916.20	\$1,221.60	\$1,832.40	\$2,443.20	\$3,054.00
Difference to Current Millage	\$112.50	\$225.00	\$300.00	\$450.00	\$600.00	\$750.00

*\* Assumes assessed value after homestead exemptions applied*

## Is the City considering different funding and investment scenarios, along with projected outcomes?

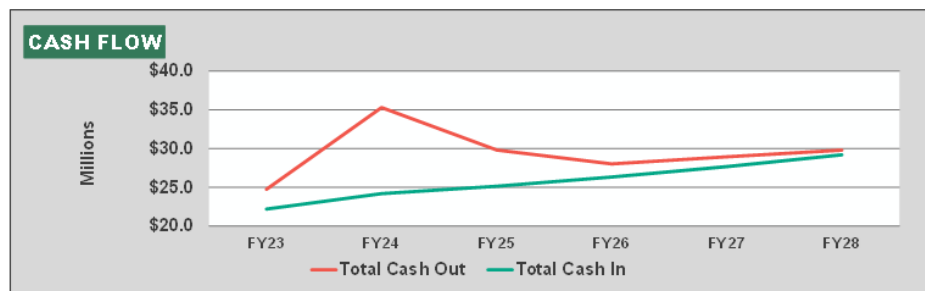
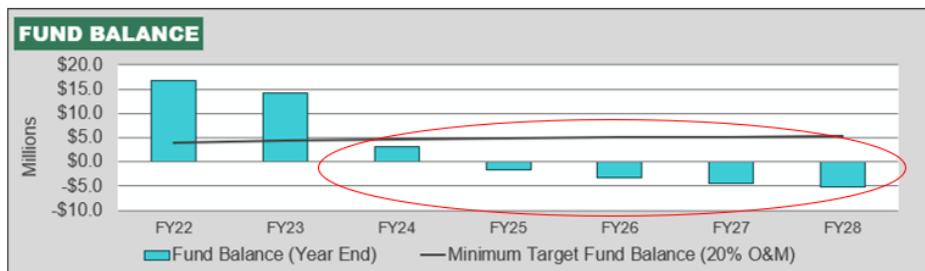
Absolutely. We hired an expert outside financial consultant, Raftelis, that specializes in developing financial forecasts for local governments across the country with different options. City Commissioners are considering four alternatives that forecast out five years each, which are shown on the following page:

## Alternative 1: No Millage Increase and With No Capital Investment



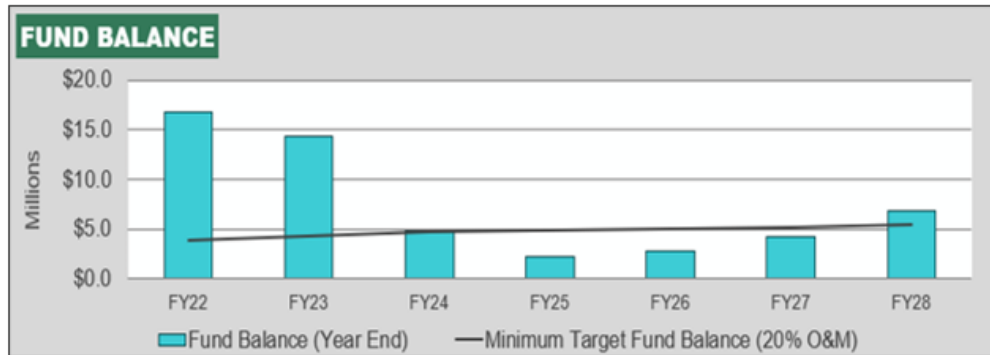
Maintain the status quo with no millage rate increase, and use cash reserves to balance the budget which will likely run out between FY26 and FY28. It forces the city to continue paying noncompetitive wages and deal with retention and recruitment gaps for staff while we forego investment in infrastructure and facilities which will continue to degrade.

## Alternative 2: No Millage Increase with Investment in Infrastructure

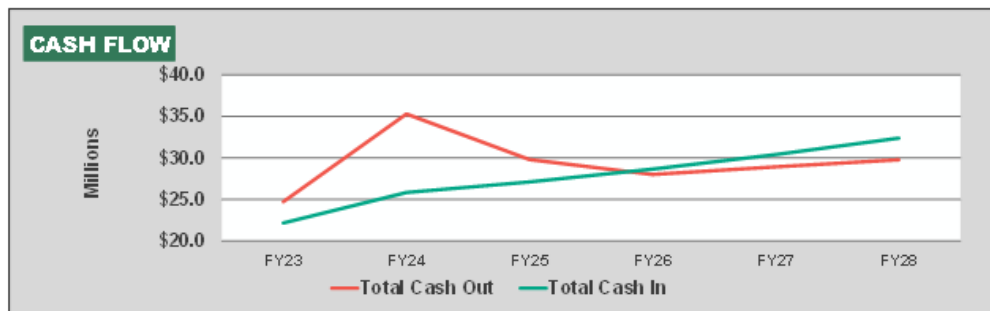


Draw from cash reserves to invest in infrastructure and facilities with a limited amount of funding. By FY26 we would run out of dollars making further investment impossible. Without a millage rate increase, this is not financially sustainable since reserves are needed to balance the budget each year during the five years.

### Alternative 3: 1.5 mill Increase and \$15.5 Million Infrastructure Investment



Draw from cash reserves and adopt 1.5 mill increase, which will allow investments in people, infrastructure, and facilities while maintaining responsible levels of cash reserves. Manage reserves levels to ensure all requirements are met.



### How do I learn more?

Visit the City's website at [www.cityofbartow.net](http://www.cityofbartow.net), and join us for a series of community meetings we're hosting – each starts at 5:30 p.m.:

**Tuesday, Sept. 5**  
Carver Center S. Gym  
520 Idlewood Ave. S

**Tuesday, Sept. 12**  
Commission Chambers  
450 N Wilson Avenue

**Wednesday, Sept. 13**  
Polk Street Comm. Center  
1255 Polk Street

### Questions?

#### City Commissioners

Seat 1 – At Large: Tanya Tucker, [ttucker@cityofbartow.net](mailto:ttucker@cityofbartow.net)  
Seat 2 – Central District, Vice Mayor: Nick Adams, [nadams@cityofbartow.net](mailto:nadams@cityofbartow.net)  
Seat 3 – North District: Trish Pfeiffer, [tpfeiffer@cityofbartow.net](mailto:tpfeiffer@cityofbartow.net)  
Seat 4 – At Large: Steve Githens, [sgithens@cityofbartow.net](mailto:sgithens@cityofbartow.net)  
Seat 5 – East District, Mayor: Leo Longworth, [llongworth@cityofbartow.net](mailto:llongworth@cityofbartow.net)

#### City Staff

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