



Temple Terrace libraries, redevelopment could face cuts from state changes

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By Debbie Carson, Staff Writer

Temple Terrace could face cuts of 5 police officers, cuts in funding for its ambitious downtown redevelopment that could total \$33.6 million over the term of the program and less money for the Temple Terrace Library.

Depending on which property tax plan passes in the Florida Legislature, Temple Terrace could lose between \$379,503 and \$864,606, Mayor Joe Affronti said. The amount might not appear to be significant, but for a city the size of Temple Terrace it is.

During a town hall meeting last week, the Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation heard from Temple Terrace elected officials and the Board of County Commissioners, among others, discuss how a rollback in property taxes would impact their services.

Mayor Joe Affronti, quoting an article in The Wall Street Journal, told the delegation that property tax values in the state have doubled in the last five years.

Affronti told the delegation that cutbacks could impact the city's contribution of tax incremental funding, which the city depends on for the downtown redevelopment project.

"It will have a major negative affect on Temple Terrace redevelopment," he said. "A major reduction in our revenue stream would threaten the success of this effort," Affronti added.

The funding is critical to the redevelopment project's future, he said. If property taxes were cut, the city could stand to lose \$33.6 million over the term of the TIF financing.

City officials also pointed out that by tightening the budget further, they would expect to lose five police officers, which equates to about 10 percent of the department's officers.

Sen. Victor Crist, who has been involved with Temple Terrace in trying to find state funding for projects, asked the city for numbers supporting the impact the proposed cuts would have.

"I would like to see the rationale," he said.

Rep. Kevin Ambler told Temple Terrace leaders that they cannot make the argument that services cannot be cut. The city must be willing to make adjustments.

"This is the first time that we have had dialog with anybody in the legislature," Affronti told the delegation, regarding discussion surrounding the proposed property tax issue.

"We have no input," he said. All the city has been able to do is look over the legislature's proposals and react.

Following the council's presentation, Mayor Affronti, Council members Ron Govin, Ken Halloway and Alison Fernandez, along with staff, left for their Tuesday night council meeting back at City Hall.

More than an hour later, the Board of County Commissioners made their presentation, explaining how a cut in property taxes would impact the county's services.

County Administrator Pat Bean told the delegation that the county could expect to drop its support for both Temple Terrace's and Plant City's library programs. The county would also reduce TIF funding, which Temple Terrace depends on to help fund the redevelopment project.

Hillsborough County has an operating budget of more than \$2 billion – half of which is based in part on property taxes.

“We have tried to be very aggressive,” Commission Chairman Jim Norman told the delegation.

He called for the state legislature to look at its own budget to trim the fat before passing on mandatory cuts to local governments.

Who to contact:

To contact the Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation, call (813) 272-5865 or mail comments to P.O. Box 1110, Tampa, FL 33601.

To contact the Temple Terrace City Council, call (813) 989-7100 or e-mail:

- Mayor Joe Affronti, jaffronti@templeterrace.com;
- Frank Chillura, fchillura@templeterrace.com;
- Alison Fernandez, afernandez@templeterrace.com;
- Ron Govin, rgovin@templeterrace.com;
- Ken Halloway, khalloway@templeterrace.com; and
- Mark Knapp, mknapp@templeterrace.com.

To contact the Board of County Commissioners, call the main line at (813) 272-5660 or call commissioners directly at:

- District 1: Rose Ferlita (813) 272-5470, ferlitar@hillsboroughcounty.org;
- District 2: Ken Hagan (813) 272-5452, hagank@hillsboroughcounty.org;
- District 3: Kevin White (813) 272-5720, whitek@hillsboroughcounty.org;
- District 4: Al Higginbotham (813) 272-5740, higginbothama@hillsboroughcounty.org;
- District 5 (At Large): Chairman Jim Norman (813) 272-5725, normanj@hillsboroughcounty.org;
- District 6 (At Large): Brian Blair (813) 272-5730, blairb@hillsboroughcounty.org; and
- District 7 (At Large): Mark Sharpe (813) 272-5735, sharpem@hillsboroughcounty.org

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