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## Chiefland moves toward adding special tax assessments



**Chiefland City Commission members listen to City Manager Mary Ellzey read the resolution for accepting a uniform method to collect special assessments for fire and first responder service within the city limits of Chiefland. They are (from left) Vice Mayor Tim West, City Commissioner Rollin Hudson, Mayor Tim West, City Commissioner Lewrissa Mainwairing and City Commissioner Norman Weaver. The primary fire protection area for Chiefland Fire Rescue extends into the unincorporated part of Levy County, too.**

### Story and Photo

**By Jeff M. Hardison © Dec. 11, 2019 at 8:09 a.m.**

**CHIEFLAND** -- Just as Levy County charges property owners special assessments for fire protection and other services, so too will the City of Chiefland impose special assessments in addition to the ad valorem property taxes, given the path started on Monday night (Dec. 10) keeps going forward.

By a 4-1 vote, with City Commissioner Rollin Hudson being the lone dissenter who voted "No," a motion by Vice Mayor Tim West, seconded by City Commissioner Norman Weaver, was adopted. That motion is for the city to adopt a uniform method of collecting non-ad valorem fees from taxpayers in the city.

City Attorney Norm Fugate told the City Commission that the adoption of this procedure simply puts Levy County Property Appraiser Osborn "Oz" Barker, Levy County Tax Collector Linda Fugate and all of the property owners in Chiefland on alert that the city is considering the imposition of special assessments to fund fire protection and first responder services in the city.

If the city moves forward, then the first special assessment would be for the fiscal year beginning on Oct. 1, 2020.

During the discussion, before he voted "No," Hudson expressed his opinion that this added special tax will not result in a lowered millage rate, but instead will simply cost all taxpayers more.

Vice Mayor West said he foresees some property owners as being exempt from the special assessment because they will not be able to afford it. When the concept of individuals not paying this special assessment due to being poverty-stricken was asked, as West had inferred, West said he thinks the City Commission can exempt individuals who show a "hardship."

Attorney Fugate said he does not remember seeing special assessments where property owners are exempted because of financial hardships. There may be some entire class of taxpayers exempted, Fugate added, but the finer details of this special taxing method is not what was being considered

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Monday night.

This resolution, he said, simply shows the city's intent to start this special assessment for fire and first responder service funding for the City of Chiefland.

The 4-1 vote in favor of the West-Weaver motion, with Hudson dissenting, shows the intent of the City Commission to move forward with this special assessment. Mayor Chris Jones and Commissioner Lewrissa Mainwaring were the other two positive votes with West and Weaver.

Mayor Jones has led the campaign to find funding to help the Chiefland Fire Rescue Department because the property value in Chiefland cannot support much in the way of an urban fire department from ad valorem property taxes alone.

Meanwhile, over the past number of years, Fire Chief James Harris, and the paid and volunteer firefighters of Chiefland continuously have shown a valiant effort as they frugally and creatively manage to save lives and property with limited funding.



## Toll Roads

**Stoney Smith is seen at the Chiefland City Commission meeting on Monday night (Dec. 9). He said he thinks that if the Florida Department of Transportation is considering building another road from Citrus County to Jefferson County (Suncoast Corridor), then FDOT should incorporate U.S. Highway 19, perhaps with a bypass around Chiefland. There are three Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (MCORES). The Suncoast Corridor (Citrus County to Jefferson County) Task Force Meeting #3 is scheduled for Dec. 17, Tuesday, at IFAS Auditorium 203 Forest Park Drive, in Perry. It begins with registration at 8 a.m. and the welcome at 9 a.m. There is a break for lunch. Public comments wrap it up at 4:30 p.m. The Northern Turnpike Corridor Task Force Meeting #3 Dec. 18,**

**Wednesday, at the Hilton Ocala 3600 S.W. 36th Ave., in Ocala. This MCORE includes Citrus, Levy, Marion and Sumter counties. These three possible toll roads, with other possible infrastructural improvements, are at the information gathering point. People who want more information about MCORES may want to visit this website <https://floridamcores.com/>. The website will show where meetings are held. There are going to be public hearings, and the FDOT has people attending government meetings to accept input. There are also methods for the public to provide input via the website.**

Photo By Jeff M. Hardison © Dec. 10, 2019 at 10:39 p.m.