

BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
Southwest Ranches, Florida

Thursday 7:00 PM

August 12, 2025

13400 Griffin Road

Present:

Mayor Steve Breitkreuz
Vice Mayor Bob Hartmann
Council Member Jim Allbritton
Council Member Gary Jablonski
Council Member David S. Kuczenski, Esq.

Russell Muniz, Town Administrator
Debra M. Ruesga, Town Clerk
Emil C. Lopez, Town Financial Administrator
Richard Dewitt, Assistant Town Attorney

Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Workshop of the Town Council of Southwest Ranches was held at 13400 Griffin Road in the Southwest Ranches Council Chambers. The meeting, having been properly noticed, was called to order by Mayor Breitkreuz at 7:07.

3. Presentation – Proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget

Mayor Breitkreuz thanked members of the public for attending and stated that the Budget Workshop was a crucial part of the budgeting process. He thanked members of the Finance Department, Town Administration, and Town staff for their hard work during the process and turned the meeting over to Town Administrator Muñiz.

Town Administrator Russell Muñiz opened the workshop by commending the Finance Department for their hard work in preparing the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 proposed budget. He then turned the meeting over to Town Financial Administrator Emil Lopez who then presented a balanced budget that maintains the current millage rate while sustaining service levels and incorporating Town Council's directive from the July 24, 2025 preliminary budget meeting.

Town Financial Administrator Lopez narrated a PowerPoint presentation which outlined revenue sources, major expenditure categories, and highlighted that public safety contracts remain the largest expense, accounting for approximately 60% of operating expenditure. He reviewed the millage rate, fire assessment, and solid waste assessment, noting no millage increase, a minimal fire assessment adjustment, and an updated solid waste rate reflecting cost-of-service and CPI adjustments. He further discussed the \$500,000 subsidy proposal to offset increases in the fire and solid waste assessments. He confirmed the inclusion of two new funded projects: the Emergency Operations Center (\$900,000 grant award with no millage impact) and the SW 160th Avenue (Dykes Road Turn Lanes) project (\$405,990 grant with a \$135,330 town match from the unassigned fund balance).

Mayor Breitkreuz expressed his appreciation to Town Financial Administrator Lopez, his team, and all Town staff for their hard work and dedication in preparing the budget. He then opened the floor to Town Council for their comments.

Vice Mayor Hartmann commended the team for maintaining minimal increases, noting this budget had one of the smallest impacts on residents, particularly senior citizens, in decades.

Council Member Allbritton expressed appreciation for the budget's stability amid rising insurance costs.

Council Member Jablonski commended the Finance Department for their excellent work with the budget and inquired about the definition of 'farm building' under agricultural exemptions. Town Financial Director Lopez and Town Administrator Muñiz referenced Florida Statute 193.461 and agreed to provide clarification.

Vice Mayor Hartmann asked whether the General Fund total of \$21,951,634 represented the full budget or indicated a surplus. Town Financial Administrator Lopez clarified that the total budget is \$31,327,035, with the General Fund covering core operations. The remaining funds come from the Transportation, Debt Service, and Solid Waste funds.

Council Member Kuczenski thanked Town Financial Director Lopez and emphasized the need to preserve reserves for future capital projects and discussed maintaining sufficient reserves to address emergencies if federal funds were delayed. Town Financial Administrator Lopez answered Council Member Kuczenski's concerned and advised the Town does have the requirement to maintain 25% in reserves and currently maintains between 30% and 35% as well a line of credit in case of delayed federal funding.

Mayor Breitkreuz shared that, thanks to the efforts of the Town Administrator and staff, a proposal to purchase property for a future public safety building may be presented to Council within the next 90 days. He emphasized that while property acquisition is an important first step, the greater financial challenge will be funding construction. He noted that although unassigned reserves have been used in the past to offset costs such as fire and waste fees, the Town should begin shifting its approach. Mayor Breitkreuz suggested that Council consider prioritizing long-term savings for the public safety project over funding smaller, though worthwhile, initiatives. He expressed a desire to complete the project without increasing millage or incurring new debt and encouraged a more conservative use of reserves to support that goal.

A consensus was reached to have staff present potential end-of-year reserve allocations for Council consideration. Town Administrator Muñiz suggested that once the estimated year-end unassigned fund balance is known, Council may consider designating a percentage of that amount specifically for the future public safety building. He proposed earmarking a significant portion—while retaining some funds for unforeseen needs. He noted that clear direction from Council on the percentage would help staff plan accordingly.

Mayor Breitkreuz opened the floor to public comments. The following members of the public spoke: Newell Hollingsworth and Jim Laskey.

The Mayor, Town Council, Administration, Staff and Town Attorney Poliakoff addressed the questions and concerns raised by public comment.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Director Lauretano-Haines addressed questions and concerns surrounding the proposed purchase of the utility vehicle for park maintenance.

Town Administrator Muñiz thanked the Mayor and Town Council for their time and input during the budget process and announced the dates of the upcoming first and second budget hearings.

Mayor Breitkreuz offered final comments and recognized the Town Council and Town Staff as well as Town residents before adjourning the meeting.

4. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Debra M. Ruesga, Town Clerk

Adopted by the Town Council on this 20th day of November, 2025.



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