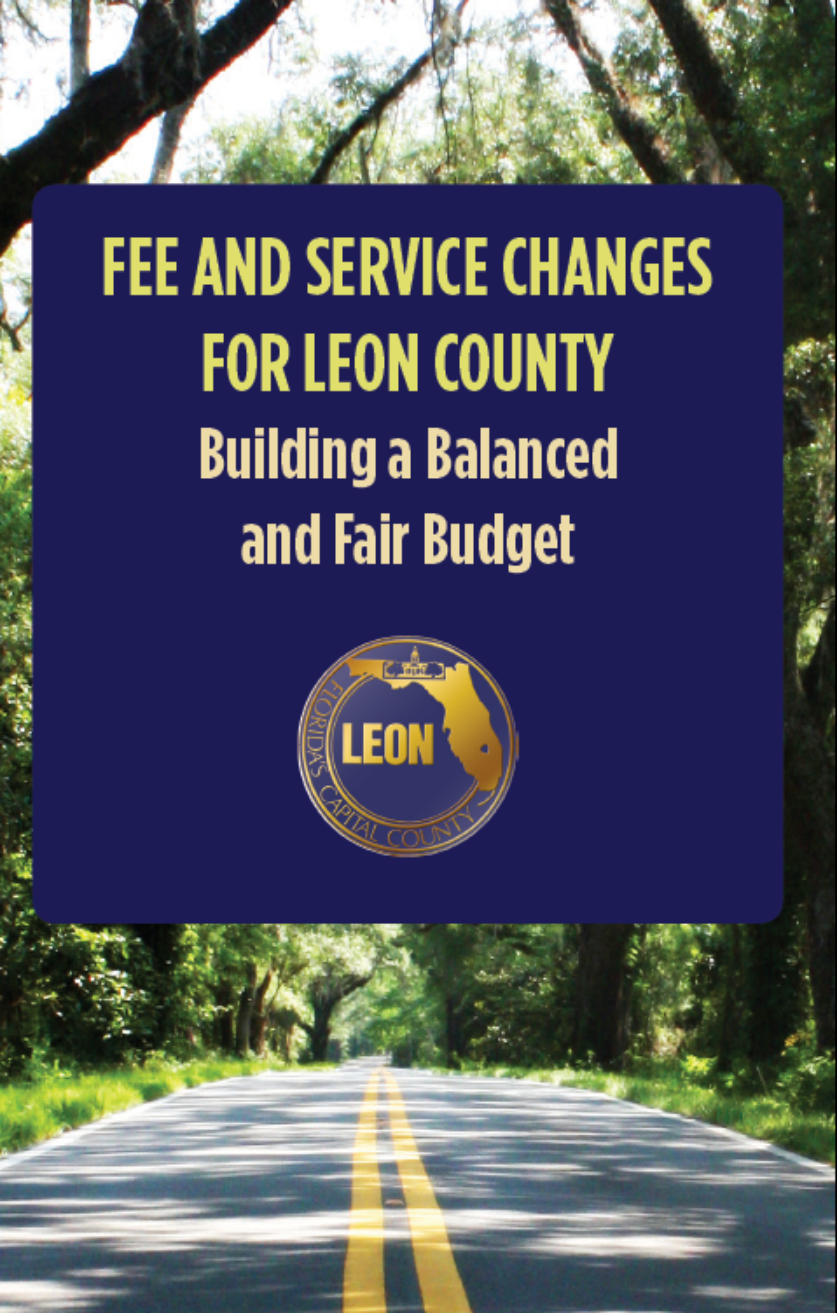
FEE AND SERVICE CHANGES FOR LEON COUNTY

Building a Balanced and Fair Budget



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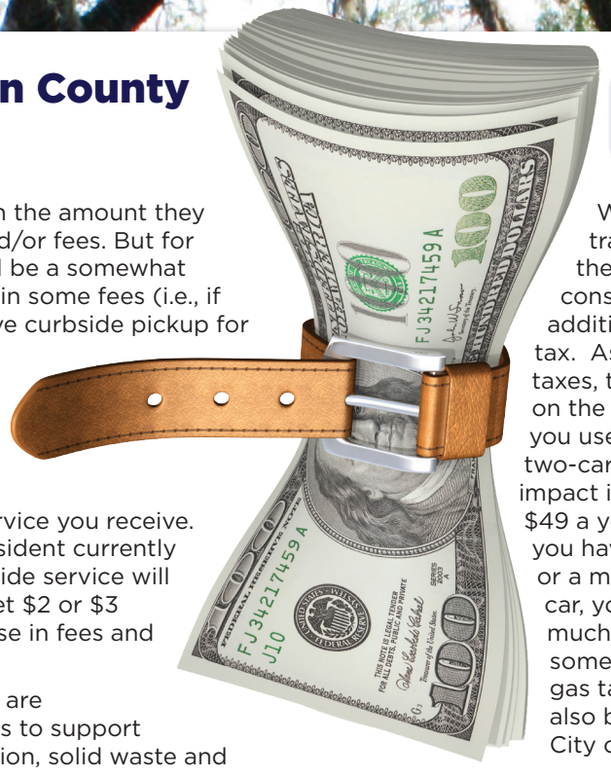

LEON COUNTY CITIZENS PAY AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE STATE PER PERSON TO OPERATE THEIR LOCAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT.

The following questions and answers are designed to help you better understand how we are continuing to work to ensure that your Leon County budget is affordable, fair, transparent and sustainable.

Q: How does Leon County's budget compare to other counties in Florida?

A: Leon County citizens pay less per person to operate their local County government than most counties in Florida – and we have the lowest cost per citizen of all mid-sized counties in the state. We not only have among the lowest costs per resident in Florida, we also rank among the lowest in workers to citizen ratios. In short, we can clearly state that we are among the leanest and most efficient county governments in Florida.

Q: Has Leon County done everything feasible to keep our budget low?

A: YES! Since 2007, we have trimmed our budget by over $62 million – that's more than $850,000 a month in reductions and savings. Plus, we have 5,000 *more* residents to serve since that time!

Q: What does this mean to me if approved?

A: For most people in the County, there will be a small impact on the amount they pay in taxes and/or fees. But for a few, there will be a somewhat larger increase in some fees (i.e., if you did not have curbside pickup for trash collection previously) to ensure that you are paying closer to your fair share of the service you receive. The average resident currently receiving curbside service will experience a net $2 or $3 monthly increase in fees and taxes.

Specifically, we are making changes to support our transportation, solid waste and stormwater programs. Beginning October 1, 2013, the County is moving toward all unincorporated area residents receiving curbside solid waste collection services and closing the rural waste service centers. For those currently receiving curbside collection, your rate will be going down from $231 to $158 for a 32% savings. For those currently using the rural waste service centers free of charge, you will now receive, and pay for, curbside service at the new reduced rate.

For stormwater, the annual rate is increasing from $20 to $85 per year for the average home. The County recognizes that differently situated properties have differing impacts on stormwater and is implementing smaller fee increases for properties such as mobile homes (going from $20 to $51). Recognizing the need for some relief for those most in need of help, the County is also considering a 50% credit for low-income seniors and disabled veterans.

With regards to transportation, the County is considering an additional 5-cent gas tax. As with all gas taxes, this one is based on the amount of gas you use. For the average two-car home, the total impact is estimated at $49 a year. Of course, if you have only one car or a more fuel efficient car, your impact will be much lower. As with some of our other local gas taxes, this one will also be shared with the City of Tallahassee.

Q: If approved, what will happen to property taxes?

A: Through the proposed changes, it is the stated desire of the County Commission to continue to provide property tax relief by not increasing the millage rate for next year, but rather have users pay for the services they receive.

Q: Why are you now considering charging some rural customers for trash service?

A: For years, many of those who live in rural areas have been using rural waste service centers (roll-off sites) at no charge. During that time, everyone else in the unincorporated areas of the County were supplementing the cost of that service. By expanding curbside pickup to everyone in the rural areas, we were able to negotiate an overall lower rate – a reduction of $73 per year for those who now receive curbside service (a 32% decrease!) In turn, we will close those drop-off centers and provide curbside pickup to everyone in the unincorporated areas of the County. For those who were not subscribers, they will now receive the curbside service and pay the $13 per month fee – while those who already use and pay for that service will experience the rate reduction.

This change is fair to everyone and now all of our rural customers will receive better garbage removal service – including yard waste, recycling and bulky items as well!

Q: Why may my stormwater fees increase?

A: It is vital that we properly manage surface water. By capturing, collecting, and cleaning it, we not only preserve our treasured local lakes, we avoid future costly clean-ups. Additionally, we must also do everything we can to ensure that homes and businesses do not experience harmful flooding after a severe storm. As part of the entire reallocation of fees and taxes now being considered, we must first recognize that the County has not increased stormwater fees in over two decades. Secondly, it is also important to recognize that even after the increase, residents in the unincorporated areas will still be paying less than those who live *inside* the incorporated areas of the County.

And finally, for those who now receive curbside trash pickup, this stormwater fee increase will be offset by the reduction in fees for curbside collection.

SINCE 2007, LEON COUNTY'S BUDGET HAS BEEN REDUCED BY OVER $62 MILLION — THAT'S A DECREASE OF OVER $850,000 A MONTH.

Thank you for your interest. We hope this helps explain some of the changes. If you have further questions, please write or call us and please attend one of the upcoming community meetings. We genuinely want your input and feedback.

Office of Financial Stewardship
(850) 606-5100
info@LeonCountyFL.gov

Community meetings will be held:

Wednesday, May 15, 2013
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Chaires Elementary School (Cafeteria)
4774 Chaires Cross Road

Thursday, May 16, 2013
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Fort Braden School (Cafeteria)
15100 Blountstown Highway

Tuesday, May 21, 2013
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Montford Middle School (Cafeteria)
5789 Pimlico Drive

Leon County Courthouse
301 South Monroe Street, Suite 502 • Tallahassee, Florida 32301
Phone (850) 606-5100 • Fax (850) 606-5101
www.LeonCountyFL.gov

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