



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

City Manager

City Council Regular Meeting Date: September 8, 2025

To: City Council
From: Dana A. Souza, City Manager
Date: August 23, 2025

SUBJECT: 2026 Legislative Priorities Discussion

BACKGROUND:

The City Council is asked to discuss Sanibel's Legislative Priorities for the 2026 Legislative Session. The Florida Legislative Session will begin on January 13, 2026, however interim committee meetings will take place in October, November, and December (2 each month). The House has already issued their Appropriations Project Request Forms which I expect will be due to Sanibel's legislative delegation in November.

Sanibel's 2026 Legislative Priorities will likely continue to focus on the community's full recovery from the impacts of Hurricanes Ian, Helene, and Milton. After Mayor Miller and I spoke with Angela Dempsey and Will McKinley of Pool-McKinley, the City's State lobbyist, staff offers the following for 2026 appropriations request for consideration. Water Quality and Home Rule positions will be added for discussion at the September 25th City Council meeting. You may [click here](#) to review Sanibel's 2025 Legislative Priorities as a reference tool.

1. **Forgiveness of the Florida Local Government Emergency Bridge Loan (Bridge Loan)** – Following Hurricane Ian, the City received a \$15,260,511 Bridge Loan from the State to assist the City with funding government operations. The loan is a 0% interest loan to the City with a repayment term of 10-years. City Council should consider asking the State to forgive the Bridge Loan to aid Sanibel's long-term recovery from Hurricane Ian.
 - **Legislative funding request: \$15,260,511**
2. **Repair the Shared Use Path System** – Sanibel's shared use path system (26 miles) experienced significant damage from Hurricane Ian's storm surge wash over and subsequent damage from debris placement on the ROW. Sanibel is requesting state assistance to repair the shared use path system which is critical in supporting visitor and resident transportation during the busy tourist season. The City received a \$1 million appropriation from the State in 2023, and \$2.5 million in 2025. The City originally requested an appropriation of \$5 million; however, Sanibel amended the appropriations request and reduced it to \$2.5 million for 2025. The City's application stated the was

Sanibel is and shall remain a barrier island sanctuary

seeking a \$5 million appropriation that would be divided over 2 years (\$2.5 million each year). Requesting an additional \$2.5 million for the shared use path for 2026 would be consistent with the previous year's application

- ***Legislative funding request: \$2.5 million***

3. **Weir Flap Gates** – As discussed during the City Council's review of the Surface Water Management Master Plan (stormwater), the plan recommends modifications be made to the existing flap gate at the Beach Road Weir and a flap gate be installed at the Tarpon Bay Weir. The flap gates are necessary to prevent/mitigate backflow of saltwater from high tides into the island's freshwater interior wetlands system. At the August 12, 2025, City Council budget workshop, the City Council directed staff to include \$130,000 in the FY26 budget for the design of the flap gates. The construction cost is currently estimated at \$500,000. Adding a 20% contingency brings the project cost to \$600,000.

- ***Legislative funding request: \$600,000***

FUNDING SOURCE: N/A

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Discussion and direction.