**City of Fort Myers Legislative Priorities 2019**

**Appropriations objectives:**

1. $19M for construction of the reclaimed water expansion project in support of the City of Fort Myers/Cape Coral water agreement adopted by both cities in 2018. The agreement allows the City of Fort Myers to produce and provide reclaimed water to supplement Cape Coral’s irrigation and fire suppression network and reduce the City of Fort Myers discharge of reclaimed water into the Caloosahatchee River. Estimated project planning/design costs are $2 million.
2. $3M for Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and Police Athletic Leagues (PAL), including funds for the STARS (Success Through Academic and Recreational Support) and Billy Bowlegs Park projects in an effort to engage at-risk youth through building relationships and working closely with community members to form proactive partnerships.
3. $17M for STARS expansion and hardening of facility to serve as a community disaster shelter
4. $1.5M for Centennial Park equipment replacement; facility is an 11-acre park located in historic downtown Fort Myers on the scenic banks of the Caloosahatchee River, hosting special events and attracting in excess of 250,000 citizens annually, with playground equipment that is 26 years old. Replacement of equipment will expand the play area and comply with ADA requirements to provide activities for children with special needs.
5. $900,000 for Riverwalk design, spanning the area from Riverside Community Center to the Edison and Ford Winter Estates to provide pedestrian connectivity and enhance the overall resident experience by providing access along the river to amenities including historic homes, the River District and recreational hubs of Riverside Community Center and Centennial Park.
6. $4M to support the Fort Myers Reentry Initiative (FMRI) to provide employment opportunities, decrease recidivism, reduce crime and improve public safety through community partnerships. Mentors from the community are assigned to each offender to work together on service-based projects. In conjunction with FMRI, the Public Safety and Beautification Project will provide employment services, career development and job training specifically in property maintenance and landscaping services within the city’s jurisdiction.

**Policy objectives:**

* Support statewide funding for the delivery of community mental health services
* Support occupational licensing reforms for workers with criminal records who are barred from licensure to remove barriers for ex-offenders seeking employment and training opportunities
* Support preservation of Home Rule authority allowing municipalities to run government through charter, ordinances, codes and plans without prior approval of the state
* Support statewide funding for water quality improvement initiatives, and infrastructure projects
* Support efforts to streamline process for removal of abandoned and derelict boats from waterways in order to prevent environmental hazards and threats to public safety
* Support preservation of the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund for attainable housing
* Support efforts to establish a Community Justice Center, bringing together local government entities, private sector partners, non-profit organizations, education and health organizations, community groups and faith-based organizations
* Support adequate funding of fire and emergency services and promotion of fire safety and prevention programs within our communities, including the availability of grants for this purpose
* Support statewide funding of community-based youth enrichment and recreational programs
* Support statewide funding of public arts and culture programs
* Oppose efforts to sunset Community Redevelopment Agencies
* Oppose preemption and regulation of short-term vacation rentals