Press Release (#113-26) | **CITY OF MARATHON**
9805 Overseas Highway Marathon, Florida 33050
305-743-0033

For Immediate Release:

City Council approves Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget, millage rate

MARATHON, FL (Sept. 24, 2026) – It took the Marathon City Council nearly $2^{1/2}$ hours on Tuesday, Sept. 22, to settle on the Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget and millage rate.

In the end, council voted 4-1 to approve Resolutions 2026-92 and 2026-93, which set the millage rate at 2.0631, which is 5.52% above the roll-back rate of 1.9552 and is the same millage rate as last year, and authorized the city's $201,318,841 budget, respectively.

The city's FY 2026-27 General Fund budget, at 2.0631 mils, results in the use of $2,615,971 from reserves – referred to as deficit spending – to balance the budget, according to Marathon Finance Director Jennifer Johnson.

Council member Lynn Landry was the lone dissenter and frequently voiced his concerns about increasing the city's deficit. Mayor Lynny Del Gaizo, Vice Mayor Debbie Struyf, Kenny Matlock, and Robyn Still voted in favor of the resolutions.

The city had met the roll-back rate for the past three years – one of only three of state's 411 municipalities and by far the largest to do so -- which led to the deficit spending.

Johnson repeatedly reminded council, which sought to bring down the proposed 18.82% increase discussed at the first public hearing on Sept. 16, that any percentage below that amount would continue to require using reserve funds and would increase the city's deficit.

"The reason we are increasing above the roll-back rate is that we were already budgeted to deficit spend about $2 million this year," Johnson said early in the

proceedings. “If that would have compounded and rolled into this year with no tax increase, you would looking closer to a $4 million spending deficit.”

Throughout the evening, council members sought ways to bring down the tax rate, as well as search for ways to generate revenue and cut expenses.

“I would like to see some more changes,” Vice Mayor Struyf said. “I’d like to try to get this down to 7%”

Discussions on cost-of-living adjustments and merit raises for city staff, costs associated with Key Colony Beach fire and emergency services, and other services provided by the city ensued, with some resulting in modifications to the budget.

City Manager Steve Williams put the costs of the council’s final decision into perspective.

“I don’t recall a time in recent years for any of our local governments, especially the city, where our financial future is so uncertain,” Williams told council. “It’s no reflection on Jen but it’s a reflection on what we have on the ballot in November.”

Williams elaborated: “We don’t know if Amendment 3 is going to pass or fail. If it passes, we still don’t know anything because then we’ll subject to the special legislative session in November or December who defines what are the exemptions from Amendment 3 – most importantly, our fire department and whatever else would get classified as our needs or our services provided.

“My point is, if you cut something to the bone, which is what all taxpayers want – me included – if you cut to the bone tonight, and you get told again in March or April to cut to the bone again, there’s nothing left on the bone.”

Several members of the community spoke at the meeting, with all calling for a lower tax rate, and by evening’s end council members agreed.

Press Release (#113-26) | **CITY OF MARATHON**
9805 Overseas Highway Marathon, Florida 33050
305-743-0033

Tuesday’s decision leaves the city’s reserves 33 days short of its 12-month goal.

Media contact: Chris Seymour, City of Marathon Public Information Officer
Email: pio@ci.marathon.fl.us Cell: 645-206-4368

For inquiries, contact City of Marathon, 305-743-0033