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Plans call for about 200 surplus Sarasota County parcels to be turned over to one or more brokers in July for sale as soon as possible

May 31, 2018 by [Rachel Brown Hackney, Editor & Publisher](#)

County staff creates spreadsheet tool providing data about every county-owned parcel

Budget Workshop		
Overview		
1,167	Total Sarasota County Parcels	Notes
1,126	Parcels completed in Phase 1 review	
41	Phase 2 parcels	Properties that are small, undevelopable
<i>\$1.16B Just Value of Sarasota County parcels, per Property Appraiser</i>		
1,126	Phase 1 Parcels in Review	Notes
818	Category A: Parcels to be retained	Justification provided
200	Category B: Ready for surplus	Includes 195 escheated lots
50	Category C: Conditions to be met	Subdivide, rezone, partnership/exchange/private sale, advisory council, legal, archaeological
8	Category D: Requires further review	Research underway to determine surplus potential
50	Category E: Already declared surplus	Some properties with conditions to be met

A chart shows the breakdown of types of parcels produced by a Sarasota County staff review, to narrow down surplus lands. Image courtesy Sarasota County

In early July, the Sarasota County Commission is expected to get a list of approximately 200 parcels that are ready to be sold as surplus, with county

staff proposing that — most likely — the property will be divided among a number of firms for marketing purposes.

A Request for Proposals being advertised by the county calls for responses by June 27. The item says the county “is seeking qualified Respondent(s) to provide real estate broker services to assist the County in the sale of properties from the County’s surplus property inventory on an as needed basis.”

The scope of services notes, “The County shall prioritize the properties and determine which ... to assign to the successful Broker(s).”

During a May 25 budget workshop, Commissioner Michael Moran stressed “pressure to perform”: Whoever wins the bid must understand the urgency in getting the land sold. County Administrator Jonathan Lewis responded that the bid materials include provisions to ensure the parcels will not languish on a [Multiple Listing Service](#) (MLS) database.

“There is a sense of urgency,” Vice Chair Charles Hines concurred with Moran. Given the current seller’s market, Hines added, the property needs to be advertised as quickly as possible. “You can’t control when a property’s sold, but we can’t sell it unless it’s offered for sale.”

He added to Lewis and Deputy County Administrator Steve Botelho, “What we’re saying is, ‘Don’t take your foot off that pedal.’”

Budget Workshop**Department Breakdown**

Managing Department	Total Properties	Just Value	Cat. A	Cat. B	Cat. C	Cat. D	Cat. E
Emergency Services	23	\$28.6M	20	1	2	-	-
Englewood CRA	12	\$3.5M	8	-	-	-	4
General Services	244	\$238.5M	24	197	-	-	23
Libraries and Historical Resources	26	\$40.4M	19	-	7	-	-
Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources	325	\$662M	293	-	24	4	4
Planning and Development Services	5	\$3.1M	2	-	3	-	-
Public Utilities: Solid Waste	20	\$95.2M	19	-	1	-	-
Public Utilities: Stormwater	281	\$35.5M	273	-	2	1	5

A chart shows details about county properties, organized by county department. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Budget Workshop**Department Breakdown (Continued)**

Managing Department	Total Properties	Just Value	Cat. A	Cat. B	Cat. C	Cat. D	Cat. E
Public Utilities: Water/Wastewater	107	\$33.3M	92	2	10	-	3
Public Works	79	\$22.4M	65	-	1	3	10
Sarasota County Area Transit	4	\$5.6M	3	-	1	-	-

The second section of the list shows the remaining numbers, by department. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Botelho also noted that staff would prioritize the sale of property likely to have “the biggest impact on the General Fund,” which is made up largely of property tax revenue. That fund also is the most constrained, as Botelho has explained in the past, because it is the source of funding for most department operations within the county and for the constitutional officers, such as Sheriff Tom Knight and Supervisor of Elections Ron Turner.

For more than a year, the commissioners have been pressing county administrative staff to sell parcels the county no longer needs, in an effort to plump up the county's finances. [In late January, the board agreed to a number of recurring reductions in department operations to balance the 2019 fiscal year budget.](#) However, two measures on the November General Election ballot could lead to significant budget deficits starting in the 2020 fiscal year, staff has explained, if those measures pass, as expected. The ballot question of greatest concern for local governments would increase the homestead property tax exemption up to an additional \$25,000 on a house with an assessed value greater than \$100,000. However, that would not apply to school district property taxes.

[The second measure — Amendment 2 — would make permanent the cap of 10% on annual non-homestead parcel assessment increases, which is set to expire on Jan. 1, 2019.](#)

[On Nov. 28, 2017, the commission settled on a number of parcels to sell,](#) including two pieces of land next to the Celery Fields in the eastern part of the county.

County Administrator Lewis has explained that staff has been involved in an in-depth analysis of all land under county ownership, to determine what could be sold and what needed to be kept. On May 25, during the budget workshop, Lewis talked about the creation of a comprehensive database. Thanks to that undertaking, he said, staff has identified 1,126 parcels with a just value of about \$1,160,000,000, according to the Sarasota County Property Appraiser's Office. "I think it's important to acknowledge what that total number looks like," he added, "as we go through this discussion."

Among those properties, for example, is the County Administration Center at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in downtown Sarasota, he pointed out.

Each parcel has been placed in a category ranging from A — those that need to be retained, with ample justification given for that decision by the

appropriate department — to E, which encompasses properties already declared surplus. Category A consists of 818 parcels, according to a chart Lewis showed the board, while 200 were in Category B, dubbed, “Ready for surplus.”

In some cases, Lewis noted, staff has more work ahead of it in making final determinations because of the transactional history of parcels, for example, and restrictions on how property can be used.



Deputy County Administrator

Steve Botelho. Rachel Hackney photo

Yet, 50 parcels in Category C, on which certain conditions will need to be met first — such as legal and archaeological reviews — soon should transition to Category B, Deputy County Administrator Botelho told the commissioners.

Commissioner Paul Caragiulo praised staff for the creation of a spreadsheet that lists each property according to category. Anyone perusing the list on

the county's website can even click on a link to the Property Appraiser's Office website, so the person can see an aerial map of the parcel.

"I think this is probably one of the best projects ever," Caragiulo said. "This is an *enormous* amount of work, an enormous amount of work."

To access the spreadsheet, a person should go to the county website, www.scgov.net, and click on the "A-Z" heading at the top of the page. Then the person should scroll down to "R," and click on [Real Estate Services](#). At the bottom of that page, a heading says, *Sarasota County Property Review*. Clicking on that link will take the person to the [spreadsheet](#), which is organized alphabetically by department.

The spreadsheet provides a name for the site, the address, the area where it is located — in a municipality or the county, for example — its category, its description of use, its zoning and its just value.

As a public tool, Botelho noted, it provides insights into how county staff is managing all its property assets. "The spreadsheet will always be up-to-date ..."

"This is really, honestly, one of the best things I've ever see a government do," Caragiulo added.

"I agree with Commissioner Caragiulo," Commissioner Moran said. "Just amazing work."

Chair Nancy Detert was absent from the workshop because of illness.

smartsheet														Report Abuse	Help
Sarasota County Property Review - Published (View Only)															
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Print	Ref. #	Managing Department	Common Name	Address	City	Link to PA Map	Disposal Category	Justification for Retaining Property	Description of Use	Current Zoning	Approximate Size	Just Value	PID #		
1	5094	Emergency Services	Fire Station 26	8020 TAMiami TRL S	VENICE	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0765001010	Category C - Partnership/Exchange	Surplus Candidate	Fire Station	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	104,544	\$552,300	0785001010		
2	5137	Emergency Services	Fire Station 15	9102 BLOOMFIELD BLVD	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0136001020	Category A - Retain	In use Emergency Services infrastructure	Fire Station	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	43,560	\$1,199,600	0136001020		
3	5186	Emergency Services	VACANT - Future Fire Station 19	101 Verna RD	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0552004031	Category A - Retain	Future site for Emergency Services infrastructure	Vacant - Potential Future Fire Station	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	294,437	\$175,200	0552004031		
4	5208	Emergency Services	ES Parking at Admin Building	1703 MORRILL ST	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=2027070061	Category B - Ready for Surplus	Surplus candidate	Parking for Emergency Services	DTE - DOWNTOWN EDGE	10,120	\$381,800	2027070061		
5	7003	Emergency Services	Fire Station 17	5431 DESOTO RD	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0014202071	Category A - Retain	In use Emergency Services infrastructure	Fire Station	RSF3 - RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY	213,627	\$1,780,100	0014002071		
6	7034	Emergency Services	Fire Station 6	4100 LOCKWOOD RIDGE RD N	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0029100006	Category A - Retain	In use Emergency Services infrastructure	Fire Station	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	69,696	\$478,000	0029100006		
7	7041	Emergency Services	Fire Station 7	4754 17TH ST	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0040000002	Category A - Retain	In use Emergency Services infrastructure	Fire Station	RSF2 - RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY	87,120	\$451,300	0040000002		
8	7124	Emergency Services	Fire Station 12	3110 BEE RIDGE RD	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0072030007	Category A - Retain	In use Emergency Services infrastructure	Fire Station	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	18,050	\$1,681,000	0072030007		
9	7184	Emergency Services	Fire Station 11	2200 STICKNEY POINT RD	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0103150046	Category A - Retain	In use Emergency Services infrastructure	Fire Station	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	23,127	\$872,000	0103150046		
10	7210	Emergency Services	Fire Station 14	8821 TAMiami TRL S	SARASOTA	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0132110036	Category A - Retain	In use Emergency Services infrastructure	Fire Station	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	23,033	\$1,464,700	0132110036		
11	7224	Emergency Services	Sheriff's Fleet Maintenance	425 OLD VENICE RD	OSPREY	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0149130001	Category A - Retain	Property category changing to Category D; under further review while property is assessed for environmental impacts and alternative location possibilities for Emergency Services Training Center.	Vehicle Maintenance Facility	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	38,892	\$675,100	0149130001		
12	7236	Emergency Services	Fire Station 23	1950 TAMiami TRL N	NOKOMIS	https://ags2.sco.gov.net/pa/research=0144030005	Category C - Subdivide	Surplus potential. Subdivide eligible. Survey, legal description and request to Property Appraiser needed.	Fire Station	GU - GOVERNMENTAL USE DISTRICT	174,240	\$622,300	0144030005		

A sample of the spreadsheet shows these properties. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Breaking it all down

With Lewis having asked the directors of the county's departments to provide overviews of their property, Rich Collins of Emergency Services was the first to make a presentation.

Most of his department's property, he pointed out, has infrastructure for the county's fire departments and rescue services. Two vacant parcels, he noted, are being held for future fire stations; one of those is near the intersection of Fruitville Road and Verna Road, he noted, at 101 Verna Road.

However, one parcel is ready to move to the surplus list, Collins continued. That is the parking lot at 1703 Morrill St., just east of the County Administration Center in downtown Sarasota. It has been reserved for Emergency Services staff in the event of a situation involving the Administration Center Collins explained. Six or eight spaces could be

reserved in the county parking lot south of Morrill Street for the same purpose, he added, so the land could be sold.

The spreadsheet tool lists the site as having about 10,120 square feet, and a just value of \$381,800.

Sarasota County

20 North Washington Boulevard



A graphic shows the location of the 20 N. Washington Blvd. property. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Among the most high-profile parcels is the one located at 20 N. Washington Blvd. in downtown Sarasota, as Jeff Lowdermilk, director of the General Services Department, noted. At the direction of the board in late November 2017, he continued, staff has had the property listed with a broker. Bids are due June 19, he said, with \$3.1 million set as the minimum. The Property Appraiser's Office has listed its just value as \$1.9 million, he added.

Vice Chair Hines has pointed out in the past that prior attempts to sell the land — in spite of its location — failed because county staff tied too many restrictions to a deal. Among those was the provision of a new parking area to replace the spaces provided in the surface lot on that site.

Many of the other surplus parcels for which Lowdermilk is responsible are 195 that are escheated; 190 of those are in the city of North Port. They are parcels on which owners failed to pay property taxes, so the land reverted to the county. The average value of each parcel is about \$2,600, Lowdermilk added.

The City of North Port has expressed an interest in some of the property, he continued, "So we're working through that."

Additionally, he said, staff is talking with abutting property owners who may be interested in acquiring 22 of the lots.

County Administrator Lewis noted that staff gave the City of North Port staff members a complete list of those escheated parcels, so they could determine the potential of some of the land to assist with stormwater and roadway expansion projects, for example. It is his intent, Lewis indicated, to gain the commission's approval "to give those lots back to the City of North Port."

Lewis was manager of that city before then-County Administrator Tom Harmer hired him last year as an assistant county administrator.



An aerial map shows the property at 1703 Morrill St. Image courtesy Sarasota County Property Appraiser's Office

Lewis further proposed that when the county does sell escheated lots as surplus property, the proceeds — as they have in the past — be placed into an affordable housing fund. He indicated that commission discussion of how that account would be used would be scheduled for a later time.

When Spencer Anderson, director of Public Works, provided an overview of properties owned by his department, he noted that the county pays about \$30,000 a year to operate Buchan Airport in Venice, but the county receives only about \$5,000 in revenue from the facility.

"It's really a big, large, grass field," Hines said. "No [control] tower. There's a very passionate group about the airport, but it's a very small group. ... Why are we in this business in this day and time?"

Only about half a dozen aircraft are based at the airport, Anderson explained. The hangars are on the west side of the runway, next to residential parcels. "I understand there's a large file on Buchan Airport," Anderson noted.

"There is litigation ... about this," County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh pointed out. "There's a lot in the files."

"I don't know what requirements have been placed on it," Hines added of the airport.

"It's fully compliant with the FAA," Anderson told him.

Hines asked for more details about the legal issues.

Getting the surplus land sold



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS ("RFQ") – PART I

The County has identified approximately 300 properties as potential surplus. As indicated below, approximately fifty inventoried properties have been declared surplus and are ready for disposition. Additional properties may become eligible for surplus after further County review.

APPROXIMATE # OF PROPERTIES	STATUS	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
200	Potential for Surplus Declaration	Includes 195 escheated lots
50	Potential for surplus declaration with conditions to be met	Conditions include: Subdivide, rezone, partnership/exchange/private sale, advisory council, legal, archaeological
8	Require further review	County currently determining surplus potential
50	Declared surplus	Some properties have conditions to be met prior to being eligible for sale

4.0 MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- 4.1 The Respondent must have experience providing broker services for both residential and commercial property listings.
- 4.2 The Respondent must hold a current State of Florida real estate broker license to market and sell real property.

A segment of the Request for Qualifications provides details about the bid. Image courtesy Sarasota County

After the department directors completed their presentations, Lewis explained about the advertisement for the Request for Qualifications for broker services, "to help us expedite the selling. ... There is only so much our existing staff can do in one fell swoop."

Given the volume of parcels, he added, staff felt outside help was a necessity.

When Commissioner Moran asked about the timeline, Lewis replied that as soon as he has the board's approval of the all the properties to be advertised for sale, the list immediately will be turned over to the broker or brokers.

Then Commissioner Alan Maio asked when staff expected to be back before the board with the full list.

Most likely, that will occur during the commission's set of meetings in early July, Botelho replied. Those sessions are scheduled for July 10 and 11.