

BOARD RECORDS  
FILED FOR RECORD

**ORDINANCE NO. 2026-008**

2026 APR -7 PM 1:45

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNTY OF SARASOTA, FLORIDA, CALLING FOR A REFERENDA ELECTION RELATING TO THE CONTINUANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND PROGRAM 0.25 MILL AD VALOREM TAX FOR AN ADDITIONAL TWENTY-YEAR PERIOD AND FURTHER RELATING TO A BOND REFERENDUM FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS IN AN AGGREGATE PRINCIPAL AMOUNT NOT-TO-EXCEED \$250,000,000, EXCLUDING REFUNDING BONDS AND PREVIOUSLY-AUTHORIZED INDEBTEDNESS, PAYABLE FROM THE 0.25 MILL AD VALOREM TAX; PROVIDING FOR FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORIZATION TO CONTINUE THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND PROGRAM AD VALOREM TAX; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORIZATION TO ISSUE BONDS; PROVIDING FOR A REFERENDUM TO CONTINUE THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND PROGRAM AD VALOREM TAX LEVY; PROVIDING FOR A BOND REFERENDUM; CALLING FOR A REFERENDA ELECTION; PROVIDING FOR POLLING PLACES; PROVIDING FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS; PROVIDING FOR HOURS OF ELECTION; PROVIDING FOR BALLOT QUESTIONS; PROVIDING FOR NOTICE OF ELECTION; PROVIDING FOR REFERENDA RESULTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR NOTIFICATION BY CLERK; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

- A. On March 9, 1999, the citizens of Sarasota County approved, by referendum, the levy of a not-to-exceed 0.25 mill ad valorem tax through December 31, 2019 to be used for the acquisition, protection and management of environmentally sensitive lands (the "Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program") and further authorized the Board of County Commissioners (the "Board") to issue bonds, payable from the levy, so as to enable the Board to acquire environmentally sensitive lands as they become available.
- B. On November 8, 2005, the citizens of Sarasota County approved a second referendum to continue the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program ad valorem tax and to expand the Program to include the acquisition and management of neighborhood parkland.
- C. The Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program has been a resounding success, resulting in the County's purchase and conservation of almost 42,000 acres of environmental lands.

Since 2005, the Neighborhood Parkland Program has also been successful in acquiring over 30 properties throughout the county for conservation and public recreation.

- D. The Board desires to submit to voter referendum the question of whether to continue the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program 0.25 mill ad valorem tax (the “Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax”) for an additional twenty (20) years through December 31, 2049.
- E. In order to provide the Board with the greatest flexibility in financing the acquisition and management of environmentally sensitive lands and parklands as well as to provide the ability to purchase these lands as they become available, the Board further desires to submit to voter referendum the question of whether, if the voters approve continuing the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax, Sarasota County shall be authorized to issue bonds in one or more series over the continued life of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program an aggregate principal amount not to exceed Two Hundred Fifty Million Dollars (\$250,000,000), excluding refunding bonds and previously-authorized indebtedness, maturing by December 31, 2049, bearing interest not to exceed the maximum lawful rate, payable from the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax.

SECTION 2. AUTHORITY OF THIS ORDINANCE. This Ordinance is enacted pursuant to the Sarasota County Charter, Section 125.013, Florida Statutes, Chapter 100, Florida Statutes, and other applicable provisions of law.

SECTION 3. AUTHORIZATION TO CONTINUE THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND PROGRAM AD VALOREM TAX. Subject to referendum and pursuant to the provisions hereof, the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax authorized by voter referendum through December 31, 2029 shall be continued through December 31, 2049 and the tax proceeds shall be used for the acquisition, protection and management of environmentally sensitive lands, and for the acquisition and management of parkland.

SECTION 4. AUTHORIZATION OF BONDS. Subject to voter referendum and pursuant to the provisions hereof, Sarasota County, Florida (the “County”) shall be authorized to issue bonds in one or more series over the continued life of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program in an aggregate principal amount not-to-exceed Two Hundred Fifty Million Dollars (\$250,000,000), excluding refunding bonds and previously-authorized indebtedness, maturing by December 31, 2049, to finance the acquisition, protection and management of environmentally sensitive lands and the acquisition and management of parkland, together with other purposes necessary, appurtenant or incidental thereto, including all costs of the issuance of the bonds. Such bonds shall be payable from the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax.

SECTION 5. REFERENDUM TO CONTINUE THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND PROGRAM AD VALOREM TAX. A referendum of the qualified electors residing in Sarasota County is hereby called to be held on November 3, 2026, to determine whether to continue the existing not-to-exceed 0.25 mill Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax for an additional twenty (20) years through December 31, 2049.

SECTION 6. BOND REFERENDUM. A bond referendum of the qualified electors residing in Sarasota County is hereby called to be held on November 3, 2026, concurrent with the referendum to continue the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax, to determine whether, if the voters approve the continuation of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax, the County shall be authorized to issue bonds over the continued life of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program in an aggregate principal amount not to exceed Two Hundred Fifty Million Dollars (\$250,000,000), excluding refunding bonds and previously-authorized indebtedness, maturing by December 31, 2049, payable from the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax, which shall be used to finance the cost to acquire, protect and manage environmentally sensitive lands and to acquire and manage parkland, together with other purposes necessary, appurtenant or incidental thereto, including all costs of the issuance of the bonds. All qualified electors residing in Sarasota County shall be entitled and permitted to vote in such bond referendum.

SECTION 7. REFERENDA ELECTION CALLED. A referenda election is hereby called to be held on November 3, 2026, for the purpose of submitting to the qualified electors of Sarasota County the questions of whether the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax should be continued through December 31, 2049, and, if the voters approve the continuation of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax, whether bonds may be issued pursuant to Sections 4 and 6 herein to finance the cost to acquire, protect and manage environmentally sensitive lands and to acquire and manage parkland.

SECTION 8. POLLING PLACES. The referendum election shall be held at the polling places designated by the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections.

SECTION 9. ELECTION OFFICIALS. The election officials to conduct said election shall be appointed and certified by the Supervisor of Elections pursuant to applicable general law.

SECTION 10. DATES AND HOURS FOR VOTING. All qualified electors residing within Sarasota County may vote in said referenda election. Absentee voting shall be permitted upon compliance with applicable provisions of general law.

- A. Early Voting: Designated Early Voting sites shall be open Monday, October 19, 2026, through Sunday, November 1, 2026. Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. daily.
- B. Election Day: (November 3, 2026): The polls shall be open on the date of said referenda election from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

SECTION 11. BALLOT QUESTIONS. The ballot questions to be voted upon in said referenda election shall be in substantially the following form:

1.

CONTINUE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND  
PROGRAM AD VALOREM TAX

Shall the existing Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program ad  
valorem tax of not-to-exceed 0.25 mill, authorized through December 31, 2029,

be continued for twenty years through December 31, 2049, and the program continued to include the acquisition, protection and management of environmentally sensitive lands and the acquisition and management of parkland for conservation and public recreation?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, FOR CONTINUATION OF AD VALOREM TAX

\_\_\_\_\_ NO, AGAINST CONTINUATION OF AD VALOREM TAX

2.

**BOND REFERENDUM FOR THE ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND**

If Question 1 is approved, shall Sarasota County be authorized to issue additional bonds over the continued life of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program in an aggregate principal amount not exceeding \$250,000,000, excluding refunding bonds and previously-authorized indebtedness, maturing by December 31, 2049, bearing interest not exceeding the maximum lawful rate, to finance the acquisition and management of environmentally sensitive lands and parkland, payable from the not-to-exceed 0.25 mill ad valorem tax?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, FOR BONDS

\_\_\_\_\_ NO, AGAINST BONDS

**SECTION 12. NOTICE OF ELECTION.** The Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners shall publish a notice of said referenda election in the Sarasota Herald Tribune, a newspaper of general circulation published in Sarasota County, Florida. Said notice shall be published once in the fifth week prior to the week of the referenda election and once in the third week prior to the week of the referenda election with the first publication to be at least thirty (30) days before the date of the referenda election. Said notice shall be in substantially the following form:

**NOTICE OF REFERENDA ELECTION**

Notice is hereby given that a referenda election will be held throughout Sarasota County, Florida, on November 3, 2026, at the polling places designated within the voting precincts of the County for the purpose of determining the following questions:

1.

**CONTINUE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND PROGRAM AD VALOREM TAX**

Shall the existing Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program ad valorem tax of not-to-exceed 0.25 mill, authorized through December 31, 2029, be continued for twenty years through December 31, 2049, and the program continued to include the acquisition, protection and management of environmentally sensitive lands and the acquisition and management of parkland for conservation and public recreation?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, FOR CONTINUATION OF AD VALOREM TAX

\_\_\_\_\_ NO, AGAINST CONTINUATION OF AD VALOREM TAX

2.

**BOND REFERENDUM FOR THE ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND PARKLAND**

If Question 1 is approved, shall Sarasota County be authorized to issue additional bonds over the continued life of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program in an aggregate principal amount not exceeding \$250,000,000, excluding refunding bonds and previously-authorized indebtedness, maturing by December 31, 2049, bearing interest not exceeding the maximum lawful rate, to finance the acquisition and management of environmentally sensitive lands and parkland, payable from the not-to-exceed 0.25 mill ad valorem tax?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, FOR BONDS

\_\_\_\_\_ NO, AGAINST BONDS

The polls will be open at the voting places on the date of such referenda election from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. All qualified voters residing within Sarasota County may vote in said election. Absentee voting will be permitted upon compliance with the applicable provisions of general law.

Karen E. Rushing, Clerk of  
the Circuit Court and the  
Ex-Officio Clerk to the  
Board of County Commissioners  
of Sarasota County, Florida.

**SECTION 13. REFERENDA RESULTS.**

- A. Question No. 1. If a majority of the votes cast at the referendum election are “FOR CONTINUATION OF AD VALOREM TAX”, such proposition shall be approved and the Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax in an amount not to exceed 0.25 mill shall be continued through December 31, 2049. If the majority of the votes cast at the referendum are “AGAINST CONTINUATION OF AD VALOREM TAX”, the existing Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax shall continue through December 31, 2029.
- B. Question No. 2. If Question No. 1 is not approved by a majority of the votes cast at the referendum election, Question No. 2 shall be moot even if approved by a majority of the votes cast at the referendum, and shall be treated as if no vote had been taken. If Question No. 1 is approved, and a majority of the votes cast with respect to Question No. 2 are “FOR BONDS”, such proposition shall be approved and the bonds may be issued to acquire

environmentally sensitive lands and parkland. If the majority of the votes cast with respect to Question No. 2 are "AGAINST BONDS", such bonds shall not be issued.

- C. Question No. 1 Approved/Question No. 2 Not Approved. If Question No. 1 is approved by the voters, but not Question No. 2, the existing Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Parkland Program Ad Valorem Tax shall be continued through December 31, 2049. However, the County would not have the increased bonding authority.

SECTION 14. SEVERABILITY. If any provision of this Ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the Ordinance which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this Ordinance are declared severable.

SECTION 15. NOTIFICATION BY CLERK. The Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners shall immediately notify the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections of the adoption of this Ordinance and transmit a certified copy of this Ordinance to the Supervisor of Elections.

SECTION 16. EFFECTIVE DATE OF ORDINANCE. This Ordinance shall become effective upon filing of the Ordinance with the Department of State.

PASSED AND DULY ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA, this 7<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2026.

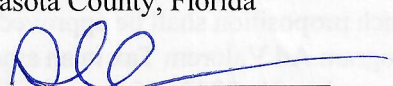
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: 

Chair

ATTEST:

KAREN E. RUSHING, Clerk of the  
Circuit Court and Ex-Officio Clerk  
of the Board of County Commissioners  
of Sarasota County, Florida

By: 

Deputy Clerk