

**FINAL PHASE OF SR 7 EXTENSION TO START NEXT YEAR**

**FDOT District 4 Tentative Work Program for 2017-2121 shows that the SR 7 Extension Funding has been moved up from FY 2020 to 2017**

Tentative FDOT Work Program shows earlier funding for SR 7 extension from 60<sup>th</sup> Street to Northlake Blvd. providing \$50.6 M in FY 2017...when this tentative program plan is finalized, the construction money could be available as early as this time next year, October 2016...hopefully, construction will begin shortly thereafter, once the remaining permits are obtained...Federal Highway Administration approval was provided February 2015...this is good news, but does not mean WPB will cease its efforts to interfere with the completion of this project...this road extension is one of several road network improvements needed to reduce the traffic impact locally, both today and in the future...Minto Westlake and GL Homes will be bringing about 10,000 new homes and related additional traffic to our area...support for this project needs to continue, however and whenever you can provide it!

**NEW SCHOOL YEAR BRINGS NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE OUR SCHOOLS BETTER FOR OUR KIDS**

With testing problems, school bus problems, aging school buildings and some continuing fundamental teaching-learning problems, our new Schools Superintendent has a lot of big opportunities to make a positive difference in our PBC schools...he's getting a lot of outside help on the transportation problems...the key to any bureaucratic problem is discovering the real root-cause, hopefully, the outside help will bring objective expertise and fixes to end this problem...on other education challenges, Dr. Avossa is working with the community to develop a long-range plan aiming at a vision of PBC School System becoming a world-class educational environment ...One of several town hall meetings will be held at Seminole Ridge HS, on Monday, Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>, at 6pm...where the teachers, administrators and the public will have the opportunity to give their input... School District Strategic Planning Input Sessions throughout the County.

**COUNTY SALES TAX INCREASE BEING SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED**

Ms. Verdenia Baker, our new County Administrator discussed a preliminary proposal for a Sales Tax Increase to fund an estimated infrastructure shortfall of about \$700-800M in road and bridge repairs and for repair/upgrade of old county facilities (like the county jail)...she briefly mentioned bonds and increased property taxes as alternative ways to pay for the needed work, but focused on Sales Tax Increase as the most likely...the current concept is for a 1/2 or a 1 cent sales tax increase, with the money being split between county and cities on a 60/40 basis for infrastructure repair/replacement...she also mentioned that the new Superintendent of Schools has expressed an interest in this to help the school district fund major shortfalls they have to repair/replace aging school facilities...Ms. Baker described how the county staff is developing their recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC)...it includes: having an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party evaluate the

**infrastructure projects, their priority and estimated costs; conducting a public survey to get citizen input on this; and, working collaboratively with the League of Cities (LoC) and the municipalities themselves...to get timely input, and to maintain transparency, collaboration and trust in the final recommendation to BCC...some specific concerns focus on: the duration of the sales tax increase (previous sales tax increase had sunset clause of 4 years, this one is considering a 10 year sunset); the need for specific uses to be identified and justified; and the assurance that the money is spent only on those projects...Ms. Baker said that she was seeking this kind of feedback ...there was also some concern was about other govt. agencies, such as Fire & Rescue and the Cultural Council, seeking a portion of these funds...she indicated that she was not inclined to support the idea that these funds be used for “operating” expenses, because it would then be very difficult to “sunset” the sales tax increase...we all agreed that the cities need to have a “seat at the table” and that this should not be a unilateral county decision...the outcome of this BCC decision process may be to put the proposed sales tax increase on the November 2016 Ballot as a referendum item for voters to approve or not...the LoC staff will continue to work with and report on County Staff efforts to define and refine the proposal, as we go forward.**

**As always, I am interested in your thoughts on these issues and any others that are of interest or concern to you, as residents of RPB...my cell phone: 561-381-3581; my email: [jhmara@royalpalmbeach.com](mailto:jhmara@royalpalmbeach.com)... Please let me know what you think.**