



Summary of taxes and fees for Port St. Lucie properties

At its Sept. 28 meeting, the Port St. Lucie City Council set the property tax rate (also known as the millage rate) at 4.6866 for fiscal year 2009–2010, which began Oct. 1 and runs through Sept. 30, 2010. They also approved rates for various other fees.

Because of a 26 percent fall in local property values this year and a 19 percent fall last year, the city lost a substantial amount of income needed to provide public services. To deal with the shortfall, management reduced staffing by 114 positions for the new fiscal year and made substantial cuts in each city departmental budget.

With the new 4.6866 millage rate, home owners will pay an average of \$369 to the city. For 2008–2009 they paid an average of \$522, though individual amounts varied depending on each home owner's homestead exemption status, how long he or she has owned the home and the appraised value of the individual property. Appraised property values are determined by the St. Lucie County Property Appraiser's office, not by the city. Their Web site is www.paslc.org.

Several other taxing authorities also collect money from each property in the city, and the City Council has no control over the amount those agencies charge. Those agencies include St. Lucie County government, the St. Lucie County Fire District, the St. Lucie County School District, the South Florida Water Management District, the Children's Services Council, the Florida Inland Navigation District and several others. It's important to note that only 16 percent of a home owner's total property taxes will go to the City of Port St. Lucie.

In addition to property taxes, which vary according to individual property value, city residents are charged various

fees for services that are not paid for by property taxes. Some fees are charged on a fixed-rate basis, others are charged as a percentage. Those fees are:

Fixed-rate fees

- Waste Pro trash removal fee—from \$253.70 to \$262.10 a year. This \$8.40-a-year increase was initiated by Waste Pro because of an increase its dumping fees.
- Storm water drainage fee—from \$133 to \$153 a year. This \$20-a-year increase will be used to maintain the city's swale and open drainage system and for a massive drainage improvement project to correct flooding on the city's east side.
- Street lighting fee—from \$19 to \$23 a year, a \$4-a-year increase. This fee is charged only to properties on streets where residents have elected to install street lights.

Percentage-based fees

- Water and sewer utility service—there will be no increase.
- Communications services tax—from 1.5 percent to 5.22 percent. This is charged as a percentage of bills for consumer services such as cell phones, Internet and cable television. The rate was raised to the statewide average charged by other cities. On a bill for \$100 of services, this would equal a \$3.72 increase.

The total of the fixed-rate fee increases is \$32.40. The total of the percentage-based fee increases will vary from household to household, but on average, property owners will pay about \$153 less in property taxes to the City of Port St. Lucie for 2010 than for 2009.

For a more detailed explanation of the 2009–10 budget, visit the city's Web site at www.cityofpsl.com.

CHECK OUT THESE GREAT OCTOBER EVENTS

The lazy days of summer are gone, but opportunities abound this month for fun and relaxation.

Green Market

Every Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Featuring locally grown fruits, vegetables, farm favorites, baked goods and arts and crafts, the market is open rain or shine in Village Square at the Port St. Lucie Civic Center.

Bach's Lunch

Tuesday, Oct. 6, noon to 1 p.m.

Stop by the city's free monthly lunchtime concert series in the Terrace Lobby of the Civic Center. Bring your own lunch, or buy it from the on-site cafe. This month's featured musician is guitarist David Potter.

Men's Senior Twilight Golf League

Every Tuesday, 3 p.m.

Perfect your swing and enjoy some camaraderie on the links at the city-owned and operated Saints Golf Course. Fee is \$75.

After the Bell (for ages 6 to 15)

Friday, Oct. 9 and Friday, Oct. 30

Held in the game room and gym of the Civic Center from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., this program provides a place for youth to play on the days when public schools are closed, for only \$14.35 per child, per day. Pre-registration is required.

After 5 LIVE!

Friday, Oct. 9 from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Held in Village Square at the Civic Center, this free monthly series celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month with live music provided by La Nueva Herencia Latina Orchestra.

Scene (Movies) on Village Square

Saturday, Oct. 10, 6 to 9 p.m.

Bring your blankets and comfy chairs while you sit under a canopy of stars and enjoy a movie in Village Square at the Civic Center. This month, "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown," followed by "Hocus Pocus." Cost is just \$2 per person.

Movie Madness

Saturday, Oct. 17, 5 to 7 p.m.

(for families and kids 12 and under)

Saturday, Oct. 24, 5 to 7 p.m.

(for families and kids 13 and older)

For just \$2 per person, movie, popcorn and a drink are provided in the Tot Room of the Port St. Lucie Civic Center. Contact Christine Smith, Recreation Leader at (772) 807-4470 a day in advance for the movie titles.

Kids' Fishing Tournament

Saturday, Oct. 17, 7:30 to 11 a.m.

For children 5 to 14 years of age. Ages 5 to 9 register at 7:30 a.m. and fish from 8 to 9 a.m. Ages 10 to 14 register at 9 a.m. and fish from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Call (772) 878-2277 for information.

Community Garage Sale

Saturday, Oct. 17, 8 a.m. to noon

Held in the parking lot of the Minsky Gym, this event is free to shoppers, and vendors pay only \$6.40 per parking spot to sell their treasures.

Fall Festival

Wednesday, Oct. 28–Sunday, Nov. 1

Loaded with fun for the whole family, this popular festival will be held at Tradition Field, 525 N.W. Peacock Blvd. Admission is just \$5 per carload and tickets for the carnival rides are \$1 each or \$20 for a one day's pass for unlimited rides. For a full schedule of times and events, including the Halloween Costume Contest, visit www.cityofpsl.com, or call (772) 878-2277.

Treasure Coast Home Expo

Friday, Oct. 30 through Sunday, Nov. 1, from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. each day

The largest home show on the Treasure Coast. Tickets are just \$5 per adult; children 16 and under are admitted for free. Admission for senior citizens (65 and older) is just \$2.50 on Friday, Oct. 30 only.

For more information about these events, visit the city's Web site at www.cityofpsl.com and click on "Calendar."