

Would the Town of Palm Harbor take over zoning? Isn't Palm Harbor already built out? Can it be changed?

Zoning changes can occur at any time to accommodate redevelopment or developers who want to convert properties for uses other than originally zoned. The Town of Palm Harbor, understanding its community's needs, will have direct authority over zoning changes.

Other cities like Clearwater spend about \$2,200 per resident. How do we plan to run our town on less than \$500.00 per resident?

These numbers are misleading since Clearwater, St. Pete and other cities in Pinellas County were formed over 100 years ago. At that time there were few county services and cities relied on departments and services they created themselves. In addition, large tourist populations demanded services not generally found in residential communities such as Palm Harbor. Today, many more options exist for the provision of services, from contracts with other governments, to large commercial providers. In most cases these services require no start-up costs and provide "economies of scale" not available to a "start-up" municipality.

What is the proposed timeline?

Ideally, the Palm Harbor Coalition would have liked to have had a binding referendum on the November 4, 2008 ballot. A binding referendum would give the community a chance to vote on whether the citizens of Palm Harbor want incorporation. A binding referendum was tabled in March 2008 for the November 2008 election even though over 1200 signatures of Palm Harbor residents were collected. The Palm Harbor Coalition is exploring the possibility of a non-binding referendum but due to time restraints and budget, it would be difficult to gather and distribute all the information Palm Harbor residents need to make an informed decision. The

Palm Harbor Coalition will be resubmitting the request for a binding referendum at the next legislative session.

I'm not dissatisfied with the level of service I get from Pinellas County, why would I want to add another level of government?

Government in the United States was designed to have four levels – federal, state, county and city. Unincorporated areas of counties were meant for rural, uninhabited or farming areas. They were never meant for large metropolitan areas. Tax codes, revenue sharing policies, grant funding and many other sources of revenue are based on the lowest form of government being cities. By not being a city we are forfeiting those revenues entirely or relying on the County government to return those funds to us each and every year.

The County has real and legitimate needs beyond the needs of individual cities. In many cases they fill those needs with tax money from unincorporated areas that would have been returned to those communities if they were incorporated. And, while we do have a duty to share in the funding of County emergencies, those funds should be drawn equally across the county, not taken from unincorporated areas that have no means to protect themselves.

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palmharborcoalition.org

The Palm Harbor Coalition

Our Mission: to plan and work together as a coalition of individuals and community groups, to identify and advocate our community needs and ensure the return of our fair share of tax dollars to Greater Palm Harbor.



Palm Harbor Coalition

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As part of the Coalition's mission to educate the citizens of Palm Harbor, Crystal Beach, Ozona and East Lake, we put together some Frequently Asked Questions on incorporation. We will be rolling out more FAQs as we move forward in the process. If you miss any, all FAQs will be posted on our website.

FAQs

I thought Palm Harbor was already a city. What is the difference?

Palm Harbor, Ozona, Crystal Beach and East Lake are all unincorporated areas of Pinellas County. As such, the Pinellas County Commission is their default government, while the 24 cities in Pinellas County have a city government responsible to only its citizens. Palm Harbor is the largest area not yet incorporated. If incorporated, it will be the 3rd largest city in Pinellas County.

What is incorporation and why does it matter to me?

Incorporation is an act of the Florida Legislature that allows a group of residents to become a city (note: city, town and village are all the same under Florida law.) Any group trying to gain incorporation must prepare a Feasibility Study and a Charter and get them approved by the State. A local Representative or Senator will then sponsor a bill in the Legislature calling for a referendum in the proposed area. If the voters approve the referendum, the area becomes a city.

What is a Feasibility Study?

A Feasibility Study is a document that gives detailed information describing the area of the proposed incorporation. It details all expected sources of revenue, projected expenses and methods of funding each required city service.

The Florida Legislature will not approve or sponsor incorporation bills that fail to show city services can be provided at less or the same tax rate.

What is a charter?

A charter is similar to a constitution; written and adopted by the citizens. It defines the city's boundaries, form of government and powers. To view the proposed Town of Palm Harbor Charter and Feasibility Study, please refer to www.palmharborcoalition.org

I hear the words "donor community". What does that mean?

A donor community simply means that the taxes paid by the citizens of a particular unincorporated area are more than the services (in dollars) they receive back from their county government. In Palm Harbor, the State Revenue Department figured that amount to be **\$17,000,000.00** for 2008.

What are the boundaries of the proposed Town of Palm Harbor?

According to the charter, the boundaries would be voted upon by the citizens of Palm Harbor, East Lake, Ozona and Crystal Beach. The proposed town can include what is known as unincorporated Palm Harbor, with or without East Lake, Ozona and Crystal Beach, depending upon the citizens' decision to incorporate in each area.

What are the demographics of the proposed Town of Palm Harbor?

Assuming all areas incorporate to become the Town of Palm Harbor, the population is estimated at 96,000. The area is largely built-out and there are no major trends reported that

would significantly affect the population numbers.

Will my taxes increase, decrease or stay the same?

According to the Feasibility Study done by the Palm Harbor Coalition and analyzed by the State of Florida's Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, the Town of Palm Harbor can operate without a tax increase. Because taxes paid by the proposed town are at a higher rate than the actual services received, it is projected that there would be a surplus which can be utilized to enhance the services for the Town of Palm Harbor or lower taxes. The proposed budget, which has taken into account the decrease in taxes due to Amendment 1, does not include a tax increase to provide the same level of services. The charter for the Town of Palm Harbor limits the authority for tax increases without voter approval.

Will my homestead be affected?

No. The Town of Palm Harbor Charter retains the homestead exemptions adopted by Pinellas County. Any exemptions under the current laws for Pinellas County tax portions also apply.

Would the Town of Palm Harbor provide better services than Pinellas County?

That would be up to the citizens and elected officials to decide. The proposed budget for a Town of Palm Harbor provides funding for the same or higher levels of services. The Palm Harbor Coalition believes that a locally controlled government would be more responsive to and more attuned to the needs of local neighborhoods and businesses. The Town of Palm Harbor would be able to provide better services more closely attuned to its citizens.