



**City Council Chambers**  
9101 Bonita Beach Road  
Bonita Springs, Florida 34135

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**PUBLIC COMMENTS**  
April 15, 2026

**COMMENT #1**

**Sent: 4/13/26 – 1:36pm**

**From: Dave Jaye <dave.jaye55@gmail.com>**

**To: Mayor Gibson & City Council**

**Subject: Materials submitted for Mayor and City Council Review for April 15, 2026 Council Meeting regarding \$70 Million Bond Tax increase**

**Re: Formal Request for Official On-the-Record Response at the April 15, 2026 City Council Meeting – Seminole Gulf Railway Corridor Acquisition and \$70 Million Bond Tax Increase Referendum**

**\*\*\*SEE ATTACHED\*\*\***

---

**END COMMENTS**

April 13, 2026

Mayor Mike Gibson and Members of the Bonita Springs City Council  
City of Bonita Springs  
9101 Bonita Beach Road SE  
Bonita Springs, FL 34135  
VIA EMAIL: [recordsrequest@cityofbonitasprings.org](mailto:recordsrequest@cityofbonitasprings.org)  
CC: City Clerk Mike Sheffield

**Re: Formal Request for Official On-the-Record Response at the April 15, 2026  
City Council Meeting – Seminole Gulf Railway Corridor Acquisition and \$70  
Million Bond Tax Increase Referendum**

Mayor Gibson and Members of the City Council,

I am writing on behalf of the Lee County Taxpayers Association to formally request that the City Council provide an official, on-the-record response to several serious public concerns regarding the proposed purchase of the Seminole Gulf Railway right-of-way and the associated \$35 million bond referendum scheduled for second reading on April 15, 2026.

Today, Monday, April 13, 2026, the City acknowledged receipt of the two Public Records Requests I filed concerning making public the Purchase Agreement and referenced Materials between the City of Bonita Springs and the Seminole Gulf Railway Corridor. Copies of those two PRRs are attached for your reference. Because I may not be able to attend the April 15, 2026 meeting in person, I respectfully request that this letter be placed in the official agenda packet and/or read into the public record during the rail corridor / bond \$70 Million Tax increase item.

**Key Public Concerns Requiring Council Response:**

According to information provided by a longtime City of Bonita Springs insider, the purchase agreement contains the following provisions that have not been disclosed to the public:

1. The City (taxpayers) is required to pay for any and all pollution cleanup and environmental remediation along the entire right-of-way.
2. Existing billboards on the right-of-way must remain in place, with all advertising revenue continuing to go to Seminole Gulf Railway.
3. Homeowners and businesses with lifetime leases or encroachments on the right-of-way must continue paying annual lease revenue directly to the railroad.
4. Seminole Gulf Railway has reserved the right to repurchase the entire corridor at any time in the future.
5. Critical railroad side connectors at the north end of Old 41 Road (near Quality Road) are excluded from the sale.
6. The contract references mandatory requirements and separate agreements that are not attached to the main document.

7. Advocates of the BART railway corridor are reportedly in discussions to be hired as the paid operators of any future trail system.

In addition, the Lee County Taxpayers Association formally requested a legal determination from City Attorney Derek Rooney regarding Mayor Gibson's potential conflict of interest. That request remains outstanding, and Attorney Rooney has advised he is out of the office until April 14, 2026.

**Attached for your reference are two documents previously prepared by the Lee County Taxpayers Association:**

- Copies of the two Public Records Requests filed with the City
- "Best Bonita Springs Railroad Line Purchase Calculation Worksheet.pdf"
- "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Bonita Springs Tax Increase.v2.pdf" (April 8, 2026 press release)

On behalf of the taxpayers we represent, I respectfully ask that the Mayor and City Council provide clear, on-the-record answers to the seven points listed above at the April 15, 2026 meeting.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Dave Jaye  
Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association  
25810 Hickory Blvd., Apt. 603  
Bonita Springs, FL 34134  
Phone: 586-488-5177  
Email: [dave.jaye55@gmail.com](mailto:dave.jaye55@gmail.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/LeeCountyTaxpayersAssociation>

April 12, 2026

Attn: Mike Sheffield, City Clerk  
Public Records Request  
Bonita Springs City Hall  
9101 Bonita Beach Road SE  
Bonita Springs, FL 34135  
Email: [recordsrequest@cityofbonitasprings.org](mailto:recordsrequest@cityofbonitasprings.org)

PRR #1 – Purchase Agreement & Referenced Documents

Subject: Public Records Request – Purchase Agreement for Seminole Gulf Railway  
Right-of-Way / Rail Corridor (Bonita Springs Portion)

Dear City Clerk / Public Records Custodian,

Pursuant to Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, this is a formal public records request for the following records:

1. Any and all purchase and sale agreements, contracts, letters of intent, term sheets, or other binding or non-binding agreements between the City of Bonita Springs (or Trust for Public Land acting on behalf of the City) and Seminole Gulf Railway (or its affiliates, agents, or representatives) concerning the acquisition of the railroad right-of-way / rail corridor within Bonita Springs city limits.
2. All documents referenced in, attached to, or incorporated by reference in the above agreements, including but not limited to exhibits, appendices, appraisals, surveys, environmental reports, title documents, or any other supporting materials.

Pursuant to Florida Statute § 119.07(1)(d) and (f), if any records responsive to this request are withheld in whole or in part, please identify each such record and provide the specific statutory citation for every exemption claimed, together with a written explanation of how the exemption applies to the withheld material.

Please provide these records in electronic format (PDF preferred) as soon as possible. If any fees are anticipated, please provide a cost estimate before proceeding.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Dave Jaye  
Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association  
25810 Hickory Blvd., Apt. 603  
Bonita Springs, FL 34134

Phone: 586-488-5177

Email: [dave.jaye55@gmail.com](mailto:dave.jaye55@gmail.com)

April 12, 2026

Attn: Mike Sheffield, City Clerk  
Public Records Request  
Bonita Springs City Hall  
9101 Bonita Beach Road SE  
Bonita Springs, FL 34135 Email: [recordsrequest@cityofbonitasprings.org](mailto:recordsrequest@cityofbonitasprings.org)

PRR #2 – Cost Calculations & Legal Opinions

Subject: Public Records Request – Internal Cost Calculations and Legal Opinions  
Regarding Seminole Gulf Railway Right-of-Way Purchase

Dear City Clerk / Public Records Custodian,

Pursuant to Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, this is a formal public records request for the following records related to the proposed acquisition of the Seminole Gulf Railway right-of-way / rail corridor within Bonita Springs city limits:

All documents created, prepared, or reviewed by City staff, consultants, financial advisors, or outside experts that calculate, estimate, or analyze the total cost of the purchase, including but not limited to purchase price, bond financing costs, interest, administrative fees, closing costs, or any other financial projections.

All legal opinions, memoranda, emails, letters, or other communications from the City Attorney, outside counsel, consultants, or City staff regarding the legality, risks, structure, or advisability of the purchase (including any analysis of the bond financing, referendum requirements, or related matters).

Any internal staff reports, memos, presentations, or briefing materials concerning the financial or legal aspects of the rail corridor acquisition.

Pursuant to Florida Statute § 119.07(1)(d) and (f), if any records responsive to this request are withheld in whole or in part, please identify each such record and provide the specific statutory citation for every exemption claimed, together with a written explanation of how the exemption applies to the withheld material.

Please provide these records in electronic format (PDF or native format preferred) as soon as possible. If any fees are anticipated, please provide a cost estimate before proceeding. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Dave Jaye  
Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association  
25810 Hickory Blvd., Apt. 603  
Bonita Springs, FL 34134  
586-488-5177  
[dave.jaye55@gmail.com](mailto:dave.jaye55@gmail.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE April 8, 2026

**Bonita Springs Railroad Purchase: \$70 Million Tax Increase to Cost Homeowners  
Approximately \$3,825**

*Mayor's Conflict of Interest Ethics Ruling Requested*

**BONITA SPRINGS, FL** – Bonita Springs homeowners and business are facing a 30 year plus financial burden following the City Council's April 1, 2026 vote to move forward with a **\$70 million** bond tax increase to buy the Seminole Gulf Railway corridor section within City Limits.

The true cost to taxpayers over the life of the 30-year bond is projected to be nearly double the \$35 Million purchase price to \$70 Million (Analysis attached). The Council increased the proposed Bond tax from \$28.6 million to \$35 million. "Scheduling a second vote on a 30-year tax increase on April 15, 2026, the day Federal taxes are due show how insensitive Bonita Springs City Council and Mayor are to our outrageously high property tax burdens," said Dave Jaye, Chairman of the Lee County Taxpayers Association and a Bonita Springs Homeowner. After voting to approve this 30 year \$70 million Bond Tax increase the City Council heard a presentation to increase transportation fees!

The Lee County Taxpayers Association released a Financial analysis of the proposed 30 year obligation bond tax increase reveals a much steeper price tag than the tax increase advocates suggest:

**Total Taxpayer Liability:** With interest rates and administrative fees, the total cost to service this debt over 30 years is estimated at nearly **\$70 million**.

**Direct Cost to Homeowners:** For the average Bonita Springs homeowner, this equates to an out-of-pocket expense of **\$3,150 to \$4,500** over the life of the bond.

**Annual Tax Increases:** Residents can expect an additional **\$105 to \$150** added to their tax bills every year for the next three decades.

**Unfunded Construction:** The current bond proposal covers **land acquisition only**. It does not include the additional millions required to remove the existing heavy rail system or the costs to design and construct the actual bike path.

**Small Business Impact:** A retail or office property with a taxable value of **\$1,000,000** will see an annual tax increase of **\$200 to \$280**. Over 30 years, this totals **\$6,000 to \$8,400** per million dollars of value.

**Large Commercial Impact:** For commercial centers or industrial warehouses valued at **\$10,000,000**, the annual increase is estimated at **\$2,000 to \$2,800**, totaling up to **\$84,000** over the life of the bond.

**Concerns Over Infrastructure Priority and Conflict of Interest:** This rail road line is a vital regional asset that should be preserved and improved for **passenger and car travel** to alleviate the area's growing traffic congestion, rather than being permanently dismantled for a

recreational trail:, noted Dave Jaye. “The Lee County Commissioners voted to double the size of RSW Airport without increasing road sending which will make traffic jams worse.”

**Mayor’s Potential Conflict of Interest** Formal requests have been filed with the City Attorney (attached) for a legal determination regarding **Mayor Mike Gibson’s** involvement in this \$70 Million Bond Tax increase expenditure.

**Proximity to Business:** Mayor Gibson owns and operates **Engel's Bicycles International**, located approximately 500 feet, a 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile from the proposed trail conversion.

**Private Gain:** Florida Statute 112.3143(3)(a) prohibits local officers from voting on measures that result in "special private gain". A taxpayer-funded cycling trail located within 0.1 miles of a bicycle retail and repair shop creates a clear nexus between the Mayor’s private interests and this public debt.

**Ethical Accountability:** The Lee County Taxpayers Association is demanding a determination on whether the Mayor must file Commission on Ethics Form 8B and abstain from all future deliberations to ensure the integrity of the August 2026 referendum.

"To ensure full transparency and public confidence, the Lee County Taxpayers Association demands that the City Attorney’s legal determination regarding **Mayor Mike Gibson** be made public no later than **April 14, 2026**. Residents deserve to know if a conflict of interest exists before **Mayor Gibson** participates in the final tax increase vote on April 15, 2026."

#

**Media Contact:** Dave Jaye, Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association; 586-488-5177  
[dave.jaye55@gmail.com](mailto:dave.jaye55@gmail.com) <https://www.facebook.com/LeeCountyTaxpayersAssociation>

**Official Data Sources:**

Lee County Property Appraiser Office <https://leepa.org/>  
<https://leepa.org/Roll/TaxRoll.aspx>

**Municipal Market Yields**

<https://www.fmsbonds.com/market-yields/>

