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## Winder FY22 budget could increase spending, millage rate

### Additional city council work session set for Thursday evening

By Scott Thompson  
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Larger investments in public works and economic/downtown development are fueling a potential 16% increase in the City of Winder's General Fund budget for fiscal year 2022, and the city council appears poised to approve an increased millage rate and higher user fees to balance the budget and help fund its priorities.

The council plans to hold its third scheduled budget work session, with just over two weeks left in the current fiscal year, at 6 p.m. Thursday, June 17, at the city's

utilities complex at 138 Sweetwater Trail, off Miles Patrick Road, to discuss what could be any final adjustments prior to the required public hearing on and adoption of the budget by the end of this month. The new fiscal year begins July 1.

Thursday's meeting will come one week after the council met for over two hours June 10 to hear city administrator Mandi Cody present the latest proposed budget. If the budget were approved as it was presented last week, the city would increase its General Fund expenditures by \$3.1 million and have a \$5.77 million deficit without any adjustments, according to figures presented by Cody.

The proposed spending plan includes more money toward public works projects — particularly more money toward road paving and stormwater infrastructure — and an additional \$1 million for the down-

town development authority, including more development/redevelopment of city-owned properties, expanding stormwater master-planning, infrastructure and street-scape improvements, and implementation of the work program being identified by a new downtown master plan in the works. The city also plans to begin implementing recommendations that will stem from a Rose Hill Cemetery master plan that is under development. Spending in the police department would also be increased in an effort by the city to address recruitment and retention issues.

Other than reducing expenditures, Cody said the budget could be balanced through a combination of raising user and impact fees across the various city services, transitioning some direct-benefit services to user fees rather than the millage rate, and raising the millage rate itself. She recommended that

the council set all user fees at 100% cost-recovery levels, including capital purchases. The new fees would be adopted along with the budget.

According to Cody's presentation, the city would need to increase its current millage rate from 4 to 14.7 mills to fully fund the council's priorities that were identified at its annual strategic planning retreat in February, though she said the "true" increase would be less because although the city has been charging residents 4 mills, residents have actually been "living off of" 14.54 mills.

The increased millage rate, which would require three public hearings in order to implement, would mean a \$1,070 tax/service increase for a single-family home valued at \$250,000, according to the figures presented.

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## School district announces Covid plans for 2021-22

When Barrow County School System students return to classrooms Aug. 3, masks will no longer be required, though they will still be recommended, especially for students and others who have not yet received a COVID-19 vaccine.

The school district laid out its Covid plans for the 2021-22 academic year in a news release Monday, with officials saying they would continue monitor community spread levels, contact-trace cases and enforce quarantines/isolation of staff and students as needed, per a mandate from the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Non-vaccinated students and staff are asked to follow the Centers for Disease Control guidelines regarding mask usage (available at cdc.gov), and employees who haven't yet been vaccinated, as well as eligible students are encouraged to get vaccinated this summer.

The district is currently exploring the possibility of

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### MAILING LABEL

## Camp Will-A-Way turns 50



Photos courtesy of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites and Barrow County Museum  
**Then-Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter gives remarks at Fort Yargo State Park on June 20, 1971, during a dedication ceremony for the new Will-A-Way Recreation Center, the first comprehensive outdoor recreational complex for people with disabilities in the U.S. Camp Will-A-Way turns 50 years old this week.**

## Leaders hope to hold anniversary celebration, historical marker dedication event later this year

*Editor's note: Camp Will-A-Way at Fort Yargo State Park in Winder, the first comprehensive outdoor recreational complex for people with disabilities in the U.S., turns 50 years old this week. The Will-A-Way Recreation Area opened in 1971 after four years of planning, design and construction, and, since 2009, Camp Twin Lakes has partnered with Fort Yargo to provide summer and weekend programs for children with serious illnesses, disabilities and other life challenges.*

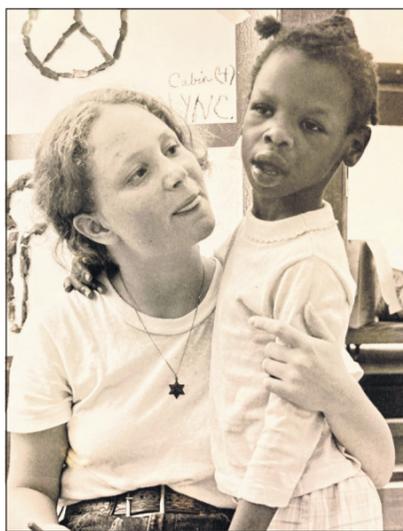
Camp leaders recently submitted an application to the Georgia Historical Society for a historical marker and, if approved for the marker in late summer, aim to hold a dedication ceremony later this year and hope to invite those who were involved in the early years of the camp to attend.

Ashley Henderson, volunteer coordinator for Camp Twin Lakes at Will-A-Way, said she hopes to record oral histories from former camp participants, volunteers, and invites people to contact her at Ashley@campTwinLakes.org or 770-867-6123, ext. 223.

Henderson provided the history and background of Camp Will-A-Way below to The Barrow News-Journal.

Georgia State Parks pioneered providing accessible recreation for people with disabilities at Fort Yargo State Park in Winder. This groundbreaking project received funding from the State of Georgia, the Federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation Land and Water Conservation Fund, and a special grant from the Contingency Reserve of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

In the mid-1950s there was a growing recognition of the lack of adequate recreational facilities to meet the growing needs of Americans with more leisure time. As a result, the federal government established the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) under the Department of the Interior. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation assisted state and local governments with planning and funding of recreation areas. Created by the BOR in 1965, The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides federal funds



A Camp Will-A-Way counselor and camper are pictured in the 1970s.



Campers and counselors fish in the 1970s.

through a 50/50 matching grant with the states.

To receive the LWCF grant monies, each state was required to complete a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

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## Pair of large industrial warehouse projects proposed in Barrow

By Scott Thompson  
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A pair of proposed large industrial warehouse projects in Barrow County were submitted to the state last week and are set to undergo a regional review process.

One of the projects, referred to as "Project Tarpon," would bring 599,600 square feet of warehouse space northeast of the intersection of Bowman Mill and Bird Hammond roads in Winder, according to a development of regional impact (DRI) form submitted by the county's planning and community development department to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Developer Panattoni Development Company, of Atlanta, is seeking a permit from Barrow County to build the warehouse space. Lisa Maloof, the county's director of economic development, said the project is still confidential and is being headed up by the state. She said the developer is working with a specific end-user that is considering Barrow County.

Panattoni specializes in building speculative and built-to-suit industrial and office spaces for national, regional and international companies in the U.S., Canada and Europe, according to its website, and lists FedEx, The Home Depot, PetSmart, Bridgestone, Ace Hardware and others as some of its major clients.

The project would be valued at an estimated \$40-50 million at full buildout, according to the DRI form, and a traffic study indicates the development would generate 992 daily trips.

The project, which must undergo a DRI review by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission over the next month because of its size and scope, is slated to be completed next year if given the greenlight.

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## Feasibility study on CFIT campus community center project wrapping up

By Scott Thompson  
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Construction on a planned community park and recreation center on the Barrow County School System's Center for Innovative Teaching (CFIT) property in Winder is still slated to begin sometime in 2023 with a combination of public and private funding through an effort being spearheaded by the Barrow Community Foundation.

First Community Development of Atlanta has completed a feasibility analysis for the project on the CFIT campus (the old Russell Middle School property) between West Candler Street and West Midland Avenue and plans to present its findings to the community foundation's board of directors later this month, Lynn Stevens, the foundation's executive director and a Barrow County Board of Education mem-

ber, said Monday, June 14.

The project, currently projected for a five-year buildout, is proposed to feature several elements — including a community "destination" playground that would have educational elements incorporated into its design and be inclusive for children of all ages and those with disabilities; a water play area; walking path; basketball/volleyball courts; outdoor reading spaces; outdoor amphitheater; sculpture and art garden; dog park; picnic pavilions; historical-information signs and a building that would include art showcases and conference space.

"It's an ambitious project, but one that's really needed in this area," Stevens said. "It just touches so many aspects of the community and checks off so many boxes."

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