

## KEY COLONY COMMISSION TACKLES WASTEWATER & STORMWATER ASSESSMENTS

By **Alex Rickert** - May 22, 2025



The Key Colony Beach City Commission moved through some hefty housekeeping in its May 15 session, addressing wastewater and stormwater charges, a vehicle purchase and a

potential reopening of the city's boat ramp among a laundry list of administrative items.

### **Changes coming for wastewater, stormwater**

Changes will be coming in next year's tax assessments for KCB's business and residential wastewater and stormwater charges, after separate discussion of each by the commission.

A minimum wastewater charge of \$64 per month for commercial properties will increase to \$71 per month, in line with the fee assessed on residential properties. The change, the commission said, will have the largest effect on two hotels within the city – the Key Colony Beach Motel and Glunz Ocean Beach Club – as each will eventually be charged based on their water usage or the minimum commercial fee multiplied by each property's number of rental units.

The city's shopping center on Sadowski Causeway will also see a noticeable increase from its \$240-per-month flat fee to a rate of \$426 per month, reflecting the center's six commercial shops. Changes will take effect in October to align with the city's new fiscal year.

"Please make sure that we are very clear that this is an error that has been going on for years, and they have benefited," said Mayor Freddie Foster. "If they think they're being punished, they actually benefited for many, many years."

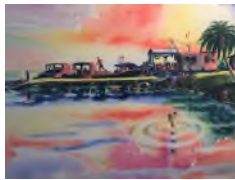
Stormwater rates, admittedly more difficult to assess as rainwater flowing from a property is not measured, will remain the same – but some commercial properties will also see overdue adjustments in the stormwater "units" assessed per property.

Revenue raised from stormwater assessments covers maintenance costs for the city's systems designed to handle rainwater and prevent runoff into canals, commissioner Tom Harding said. However, the roughly \$130,000 collected each year by the city in stormwater assessments is inadequate to bolster reserves and complete any major stormwater projects, increasing the city's reliance on grants, he said.



Residential units within the city are currently assessed at \$80 per household, while commercial accounts are billed at \$165 per unit – both rates were raised in 2024. Similar to wastewater assessments, Harding said, larger multi-unit hotels have long paid a disproportionately low share of stormwater fees. In 2024, two 46- and 40-unit hotels paid \$660 and \$330, respectively, for four and two assessed commercial units, versus \$4,080 paid by a 51-unit condo complex.

Harding said that while he couldn't justify a rate increase for the coming year, the number of units assessed per commercial property merited a closer look. Moving individually through each commercial property in the city, the commission readjusted billed units, also set to take effect in October. Glunz Ocean Beach Club, the Key Colony Beach Motel and Causeway Shopping Center will see the most significant increases, in line with their individual rental units and commercial storefronts.



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**In other news:**

- Anonymous letters and comments sent without specific resident names attached, received by the city on a regular basis, will be retained for public record, but will not be discussed in future meetings, the commission announced. "They are public record, because they are sent to us, but you can give them the weight that you would an unsigned document," City Attorney Dirk Smits told commissioners.
- A new Polaris Utility Terrain Vehicle, approved for purchase in the amount of \$22,898, will assist the city's building department and should serve as an asset for maneuvering trailers in the city's storage lots as well as potential post-storm operations.
- Following a resident request and brief discussion, the commission agreed to explore reopening the city's boat ramp, set behind City Hall on 7th Street. Closed due to traffic and safety concerns, with the bottom of the ramp deteriorated and facing a steep dropoff, the ramp is currently used in very limited capacities by law enforcement agencies and on an emergency basis. Resident suggestions included allowing access only to Key Colony homeowners, an idea the commission said would prove difficult as Marathon allows KCB residents free access to its three public boat ramps.

#### ALEX RICKERT

Alex Rickert made the perfectly natural career progression from dolphin trainer to newspaper editor in 2021 after freelancing for Keys Weekly while working full time at Dolphin Research Center. A resident of Marathon since 2015, he fell in love with the Florida Keys community by helping multiple organizations and friends rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Irma. An avid runner, actor, and spearfisherman, he spends as much of his time outside of work on or under the sea having civil disagreements with sharks.

