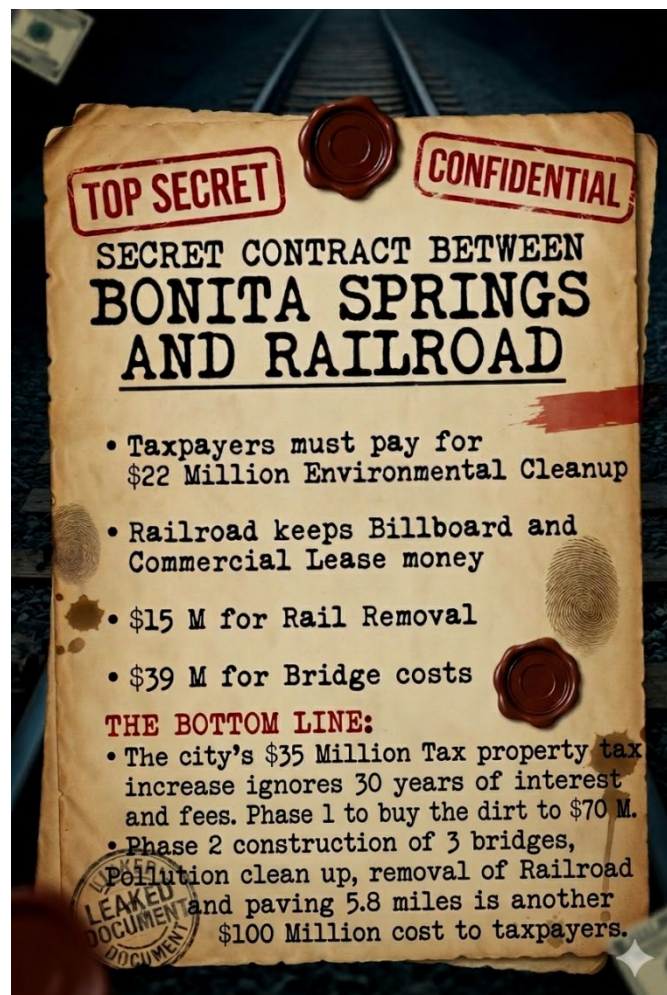




## Taxpayer Watchdog Uncovers “Secret” \$70 Million Rail-Trail Contract Between Bonita Springs and Rail Road

Bonita Springs Mayor and City Council voted April 15, 2026 to send a \$35 million bond property tax increase to the August 18, 2026 ballot. But they **hid the actual Purchase Agreement** from taxpayers. It was not included in the meeting packets. It was not discussed on the record. It took a formal Public Records Request from the Lee County Taxpayers Association to force City Hall to hand over the 21 page “Sweetheart” Purchase agreement with the Railroad.

Click on the “Top Secret Contract” icon to see the 21 Page Purchase Agreement. Links to the key documents are next to this icon.



“The Purchase Agreement with the Railroad is even worse than we feared,” said Dave Jaye, Chairman of the Lee County Taxpayers Association. This Purchase Agreement was intentionally withheld from the public by the Mayor and City Council because it is a Sweetheart Deal for the Railroad, as taxpayers are just buying the dirt



and will cost taxpayers another \$100 million in Phase 2 bike trail and bridge construction and pollution cleanups.

“Bicycle Store Operator Mayor Mike Gibson and City Council are asking for a \$35 million blank check while keeping the actual purchase contract under lock and key,” said Jaye. “They voted for a 30-year bond that will balloon to at least **\$70 million** after interest, consultants, and legal fees are factored in. This is a new, massive 30-year tax hike costing the average homeowner \$3,825! Bonita Springs Mayor and Council didn't have the decency to show the taxpayers the fine print in the 21-page contract before voting to send the \$70 million bond tax increase to the voters on August 18, 2026 rather than November 2, 2026 general election, when most people vote.”

According to Jaye’s analysis of the newly uncovered March 26, 2026, agreement, the “hidden” terms include:

**\$70 Million Total Taxpayer Debt:** While the “sticker price” is cited at \$35 million, the 30-year debt interest and fees will cost Bonita families **\$70 million**—\$3,825 per average household.

**Toxic Liability “As-Is”:** The contract explicitly states the City accepts the property in its current environmental condition. Taxpayers are now on the hook for cleaning up a century of industrial railroad pollution estimated \$10 to \$22 million in mandatory environmental cleanup of over 100 years of Railroad Industrial Pollution. Detailed railroad pollution cleanup worksheet with full footnotes at <https://usataxfighters.org/>

**The “Meat vs. “Bone” Revenue Split:** Taxpayers pay the \$70 million mortgage, but the Railroad reportedly keeps the monthly revenue from existing billboards and commercial leases on the property.

**“The Buy-Back Risk:** Federal ‘Rail Banking’ laws mean the railroad can potentially reclaim the tracks after taxpayers spend millions on improvements.”

**“This Secret Purchase Agreement for \$35 Million Bond 30-year Property Tax Increase only buys the dirt,”** said Dave Jaye.

**“This Purchase Agreement Fails to include:**

**\$45 Million for Three Bridges:** “Taxpayers are being asked for a \$45 million purchase price for dirt but are being stuck with a \$45 million bill just for three bridge crossings at Bonita Beach Road, Old 41, and West Terry. “Taxpayers are being asked to pay a \$35 million purchase price for dirt but are being stuck with a \$45 million bill just for three bridge crossings at Bonita Beach Road, Old 41, and West Terry.



**No Professional Appraisal:** How can the Mayor and Council justify asking for a \$70 million tax increase when they **haven't even finished a professional Real Estate Appraisal** of the property, which won't be ready until after the vote on the 30-year property tax increase?

**\$14.5 million for Paving 5.8 Mile Bonita Springs Railway Segment:** This figure is based on a standard cost of **\$2.5 million per mile** for a heavy-duty, 12-foot-wide multi-use trail with mandatory drainage and sub-base infrastructure.

**\$15 million for rail removal:** We have to pay to rip up and haul away miles of heavy steel and old railroad ties.

**\$10 million in engineering and Fees:** More money for consultants and outside experts.

When you add this **\$100 million Phase 2 bill** to the original \$70 million debt, this isn't a \$35 million project, it is a **\$170 million taxpayer disaster**. Detailed Worksheet Identifying the \$100 Million Phase 2 of the Bonita Rail to Trail, with Full Footnotes, at <https://usataxfighters.org/>


We are still waiting for the City to release the bond financing projections that prove how much this will really cost our families over this 30 year bond tax increase proposal," said Dave Jaye. "Where are the legal memos regarding the toxic cleanup liability that we are 'As-Is' accepting?" Bonita Springs politicians are asking us for a \$70 million check, approximately, but they are still hiding the internal reports that justify that number." See PRR 2 Internal Cost Calculations and Legal Opinions Regarding Seminole Gulf Railway Right-of-Way Purchase.

"This Mayor and council have betrayed taxpayers with back-room "sweetheart" deals and non-transparent government," Jaye continued. "No resident nor business would sign a 30-year mortgage without seeing the contract, yet that is exactly what this Mayor and Council did to the citizens of Bonita Springs. We are calling on the public to look at these documents on our website and vote **NO** on August 16, 2026, on this \$70 Million, 30-year property tax disaster."

For more analysis, video and source documents visit the **Lee County Taxpayers Association** Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/LeeCountyTaxpayersAssociation> or <https://usataxfighters.org/>



**LEE COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION** 

**Exposing Public Corruption and Wasteful Spending**

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<https://www.facebook.com/LeeCountyTaxpayersAssociation>  
<https://tripleddippers.org/>



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#### Facebook Post

#### **THE SECRET CONTRACT IS OUT: Bonita Springs Council Voted to Tax You \$70 Million Without Showing the Public the Bill.**

The Mayor and City Council recently voted to send a \$35 million bond to the ballot. But they **hid the actual Purchase Agreement** from you. It was not included in the meeting packets. It was not discussed on the record.

#### **What they didn't want you to know:**

**The True Cost:** \$35 million is just the start. After 30 years of interest and fees, you are paying **\$70 million**.

**You Own the Pollution:** The contract says we buy the land "As-Is." We are inheriting millions in unknown cleanup costs for toxic railroad soil.

**No Safe Crossings:** The \$70 million doesn't include the **\$20 million+** needed for flyover bridges at Bonita Beach Road and Old 41. That's "Phase 2" debt they aren't talking about yet.

**KNOW THE TRUTH BEFORE YOU VOTE. VOTE NO ON THE \$70 MILLION TAX HIKE.**



**NO** **\$70 MILLION**  
on **PROPERTY TAX**  
**INCREASE**

**\$3,825 PER HOMEOWNER**

**UNNECESSARY. MISLEADING. RISKY.**

**\$70 MILLION PROPERTY TAX INCREASE**

**\$3,825 PER HOMEOWNER**

**VOTE NO**

**EVERY HOME PAYS FOR  
THE MAYOR'S BIKE TRAIL**



**The Mayor's \$70 Million  
Bike Trail Tax Increase!**

**Mayor Mike Gibson  
Owns a Bike Shop**

**500 feet from the railroad he  
is proposing to convert to a  
bike path—increasing profit at  
taxpayers expense!**

27310 Old  
41 Rd,  
Bonita  
Springs, FL  
34135

**UNMASKING PHASE 2: BONITA TAXPAYER LIABILITY for 5.8-MILE TRAIL**

<p>LEE COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>THREE BRIDGE LIABILITY: \$45.0 MILLION</b></p> <p>BONITA BEACH ROAD (6-LANES): \$22.0M</p> <p>OLD 41 (4-LANES): \$13.0M</p> <p>WEST TERRY STREET (2-LANES): \$10.0M</p> <p>Complex spans, ADA ramps, and utility relocation for all three essential crossings.</p> <p>UNMASKED</p>	<p>LEE COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>POLLUTION CLEANUP (AS-IS): \$22.0 MILLION</b></p> <p>HAZARDOUS MATERIAL</p> <p>Toxic (Arsenic/Herbicides)</p> <p>Capping &amp; Soil Remediation (EPA Benchmark \$2M/Mile)</p> <p>Bonita taxpayers accept 'As-Is' industrial liability.</p> <p>UNMASKED</p>	<p>LEE COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>PAVING (5.8 MILES): \$14.5 MILLION</b></p> <p><b>PAVING (5.8 MILES): \$14.5 MILLION</b></p> <p><b>\$2.5M PER MILE</b> Mandatory trail construction and drainage. Bonita Springs City Segment Only.</p> <p>UNMASKED</p>	<p>LEE COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>RAIL &amp; TIE REMOVAL: \$10.0 MILLION</b></p> <p><b>RAIL &amp; TIE REMOVAL: \$10.0 MILLION</b></p> <p>Creosote tie disposal &amp; steel extraction Hazardous salvage rates apply.</p> <p>UNMASKED</p>	<p>LEE COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION</p> <p><b>ENGINEERING &amp; SOFT COSTS: \$10.5 MILLION</b></p> <p><b>ENGINEERING &amp; SOFT COSTS: \$10.5 MILLION</b></p> <p>10-15% Mandatory Allocation Design, State/Federal Permitting, &amp; Inspection (CEI).</p> <p>UNMASKED</p>
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All figures based on unmasked 21-Page Purchase & Sale Agreement and 2026 Florida infrastructure benchmarks. **LCTA**