



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Taxpayers Ripped Off: Bonita Springs to Give Railroad \$28.6 Million for \$378,005 of Polluted Railroad Dirt

BONITA SPRINGS, FL — In a brazen taxpayer heist, the City of Bonita Springs is pushing voters to approve \$28.6 million for just 6.15 miles of the Seminole Gulf Railroad corridor — land the Lee County Property Appraiser values at only \$378,005 on the 2025 tax roll. That’s a 93-to-1 rip-off — 93 times the official taxable value — turning public money into a massive windfall for a private railroad while saddling residents with \$170 million in total debt and a century of toxic cleanup. See the full audit and documents: <https://usataxfighters.org/bonita-springs-tax-increase-proposal-what-taxpayers-need-to-know/>



The Scandal in Plain Numbers:

- **Official Tax Value:** \$378,005 (Real Assessed Value per 2025 Lee County Tax Roll for the Seminole Gulf Railroad Bonita Springs segment)
- **City Offer:** \$28.6 million— 93 times higher
- **Ballot Ask:** \$35 million bond (ballot measure August 18, 2026) that balloons to \$70 million with 30 years of interest and fees
- **Phase 2 Bombshell:** Another \$100 million+ for full Rails-to-Trails conversion— ripping out tracks, removing 100 years of industrial pollution (HazMat), paving the corridor, and building bridges over Bonita Beach Road, W. Terry, and Old 41.
- **Total Taxpayer Hit:** \$170 million — all for “as-is” contaminated railroad dirt
- **Railroad Keeps All Revenue:** Billboard, cell towers, Utility & Lease annual payments continue even after taxpayers buy the land for \$28.6 million.



“This is a taxpayer mugging,” said Dave Jaye, Chairman of the Lee County Taxpayers Association (LCTA). “The railroad pays only \$4,000 a year in taxes by claiming their land is almost worthless. Now Mayor Gibson and the City Council want to give the Seminole Gulf Railroad a \$28.6 million golden parachute while forcing families and businesses to swallow \$170 million in debt and toxic cleanup costs. This is a Red Alert Emergency caused by government incompetence.

Serious Red Flags & Conflicts of Interest:



- **No independent appraisal** before the vote — deliberately delayed until *after* the August 18 election.
- **Purchase agreement hidden** from the public— LCTA had to file a public records request to expose the 21-page sweetheart deal
- **Mayor’s glaring conflict:** Mayor Mike Gibson operates a bike shop and pizza parlor just 500 feet from the proposed trail. His businesses stand to make a windfall in increased revenue if voters approve this \$170 million taxpayer-funded project.
- **Unknown railroad influence:** It remains unclear how much — if any — money the City Council or the Mayor has received from the Seminole Gulf Railroad or its allies.
- **Zero Railroad accountability** for 100+ years of Industrial hazardous waste left behind for taxpayers to clean up. City buys the Railroad segment “As is”.

No competent government would force taxpayers to pay 93 times the appraised value for polluted land without a proper appraisal, full environmental disclosure, or cleanup agreement. No responsible buyer— let alone a city spending taxpayer dollars— would pay 93 times the tax-appraised value for polluted land without a full



appraisal, full disclosure, or an environmental cleanup agreement. Yet that's exactly what Bonita Springs voters are being asked to approve.

The Lee County Taxpayers Association urges voters to REJECT this reckless \$35 million bond property tax increase on August 18, 2026.


“Before you vote please review the tax rolls, the purchase agreement, and our audit at <https://usataxfighters.org/>” asked Dave Jaye. “The Railroad and the Mayor get the meat, and the taxpayers get the bone. Protect your wallet and your grandchildren from this 30-year \$170 property tax increase by voting no on August 18, 2026.”

COMING SOON: The Bonita Springs Debt Sentence Calculator

Bonita Springs residents and business owners are about to get the clear, unfiltered financial data that City Hall is trying to hide before the August 18th election.

The Lee County Taxpayers Association is finalizing our interactive **30-Year Debt Sentence Calculator**. Watch this space. The calculator—your most powerful weapon for fiscal accountability—is coming soon.

About the Lee County Taxpayers Association: A non-partisan watchdog fighting for government transparency, fiscal responsibility, and taxpayer rights. Visit <https://usataxfighters.org/> for source documents and updates.

LEE COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION 

Exposing Public Corruption and Wasteful Spending

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\$35 Million Property Tax Increase Proposal on August 18, 2026
Ballot for Bonita Springs to Buy Rail Road Tracks



Railroad's 'MEAT':
Billboards & Utility Revenue
- (\$200k year/\$6M over 30 Years) -

Taxpayer's 'BONE':
Environmental Liabilities &
\$100 Million+ Unfunded
Infrastructure

usataxfighters.org

