

## UNDERSTANDING SAFETY HARBOR PROPERTY TAXES *by: Josh M. Stefancic, City Manager*

### WHAT ARE PROPERTY TAXES?

Property taxes are a major source of revenue for counties and municipalities throughout Florida, including the City of Safety Harbor. They account for approximately 38% of the community's annual general fund revenue.

Homeowners and businesses pay taxes based on the assessed value of their property. These funds support essential services such as fire protection, EMS response, law enforcement, emergency management, street repairs, and infrastructure maintenance. They also fund amenities residents enjoy, including the library, recreation centers, playgrounds and parks, special events, and contributions to non-city agencies.

Property tax rates are set annually during two public meetings by the City Commission, which consists of an elected Mayor and four Commissioners. State law limits how much property taxes can increase each year.

### HOW IS PROPERTY TAX REVENUE GENERATED?

Property values are assessed by the Pinellas County Property Appraiser and multiplied by a tax rate (called a millage rate) to determine the amount owed. The Property Appraiser is legally responsible for determining market value based on real estate activity.

Rising property values can increase revenue even if the tax rate remains unchanged. Safety Harbor has maintained a 3.9500 millage rate since 2017, which is lower than rates in Clearwater, Dunedin, Largo, Oldsmar, St. Petersburg, and Tarpon Springs.

A local homeowner's annual tax bill also includes taxes for other entities such as Pinellas County (General Fund, Health Department, and EMS), state and local public schools, and the Suncoast Transit Authority.

Based on the current millage rate and property values set by the County Appraiser, Safety Harbor will receive approximately \$7,850,000 in property tax revenue for FY25/26.

### HOW DOES THE CITY USE PROPERTY TAX REVENUE?

The \$7,850,000 in property tax revenue represents 37.59% of the City's general fund. Property taxes are the most stable and predictable revenue source, enabling long-term planning, and consistent service delivery.

Other general fund revenue sources include:

- Intergovernmental revenue: 20%
- Other taxes: 17%
- Franchise fees: 9%
- Charges for services: 7.5%
- Interest earnings: 4%
- Miscellaneous: Remaining balance

The total general fund revenue for FY25/26 is \$20,881,840.

### WHAT SERVICES DOES THE GENERAL FUND PAY FOR?

The general fund supports:

- Public safety: 36%
- Parks & recreation: 25%
- City administration & general government: 16%
- Library services: 8%
- Streets, facilities, & fleet maintenance: 8%
- Planning & permitting: 7%

For FY25/26, public safety budgeted expenditures for fire protection, EMS, and law enforcement services total \$7,646,220, nearly matching property tax revenue. In other words, property taxes almost fully cover public safety costs alone.

Reducing property taxes could make it difficult to meet rising costs without cutting services or increasing other fees. For additional information, visit [cityofsafetyharbor.com/propertytax](http://cityofsafetyharbor.com/propertytax).

# AROUND SAFETY HARBOR

## UNDERSTANDING THE “LIVE LOCAL ACT” & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

by: Carol Stricklin, AICP, Community Development Director



and land use regulations. The Act requires that local governments allow eligible affordable housing developments in areas zoned for commercial, industrial, and mixed-use.

To be eligible, a proposed project must set aside at least 40 percent of its units as affordable multi-

The 2023 Florida law, the Live Local Act (the Act), encourages development of affordable housing statewide through funding for affordable housing programs, tax incentives, and preemption of some local zoning

family rental units to income-eligible households for a period of at least 30 years. Live Local Act projects must be reviewed administratively, and local governments cannot require a zoning or land use change or other board approval for land use, density, height, or floor area ratio requirements.

In Safety Harbor, the Act creates the potential for development of a mixed-use residential project on properties in certain zoning districts at densities of up to 15 units per acre. The city has amended the Land Development Code to put in place procedures for review of development proposed under the Act and authorizes the City Manager to administratively approve eligible projects.

For more information about the affordable housing and Live Local Act development in Pinellas County, please visit [forwardpinellas.org/housing](http://forwardpinellas.org/housing).

## BILL CROPSEY CITIZENS ACADEMY

by: Michelle Posewitz, Human Resources Director

The City of Safety Harbor is now accepting applications for the 2026 Bill Cropsey Citizens Academy. Sessions will be held on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., beginning April 14, 2026. The Academy runs for seven weeks and is limited to 24 participants. Applicants will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis, with preference given to Safety Harbor residents.

Participants will tour key City facilities, engage with City leaders, learn how to get involved in local government, and gain insight into the essential functions of a municipal government agency.

The application deadline is Monday, March 30, 2026. Applications are available online at [cityofsafetyharbor.com/citizensacademy](http://cityofsafetyharbor.com/citizensacademy).

For questions, please contact Human Resources at (727) 724-1555 ext. 1401.



# HARBOR HAPPENINGS

Check [cityofsafetyharbor.com](http://cityofsafetyharbor.com) for meeting locations and [safetyharborevents.com](http://safetyharborevents.com) for special events details.

## JANUARY

### CITY MEETINGS

#### 1 New Year's Day – City Closed

#### No Recycling Collection

7 Public Art Committee, 6 p.m.

8 Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, 6 p.m.

8 Finance Advisory Committee, 6:30 p.m.

13 Library Advisory Committee, 7 p.m.

14 Planning & Zoning/Board of Appeals, 6:30 p.m.

21 Code Enforcement Board, 6:30 p.m.

#### 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – City Closed

#### Trash Collection Occurs as Usual

20 City Commission, 7 p.m.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

10 Folly Faire, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

16 3<sup>RD</sup> Friday Street Celebration, 6-10 p.m.

**Market on Main** **SUNDAYS**  
10AM UNTIL 3PM **at the Gazebo**

## FEBRUARY

### CITY MEETINGS

2 City Commission, 7 p.m.

4 Public Art Committee, 6 p.m.

5 Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, 6 p.m.

10 Library Advisory Committee, 7 p.m.

11 Planning & Zoning/Board of Appeals, 6:30 p.m.

12 Finance Advisory Committee, 6:30 p.m.

16 City Commission, 7 p.m.

18 Code Enforcement Board, 6:30 p.m.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

7 Best Damn Race, 6:30 a.m.

20 3<sup>RD</sup> Friday Street Celebration, 6-10 p.m.

14 Folly Faire, 9 am-12 p.m.

20 3rd Friday Street Celebration, 6-10 p.m.

21 Art & Seafood on the Water, 11 am-9 p.m.

22 Art & Seafood on the Water, 11 am-6 p.m.

28 Links for the Library &  
Golf Cart Cruise In, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

## MUNICIPAL ELECTION

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MARCH 10  
2026

## 2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION UPDATES

by: Rachael Telesca, City Clerk

The City of Safety Harbor candidate qualifying period for the 2026 Municipal Election ended December 8, 2025. The Mayor's seat and Seat #4 were open for the 2026 election.

Mayor Joe Ayoub met all qualification requirements and ran unopposed. Mayor Ayoub will continue serving the City and our residents for an additional three years.

Two candidates qualified for Commissioner Seat #4 – David Gallagher and Kevin Shanks, and will be placed on the ballot. Congratulations Candidates Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shanks!

The Municipal Election is on Tuesday, March 10, 2026. The last day to register to vote in this election is Monday, February 9, 2026. For more election information, visit [cityofsafetyharbor.com/elections](http://cityofsafetyharbor.com/elections).

# BEGINNING THE NEW YEAR TOGETHER: A MESSAGE FROM YOUR LIBRARY DIRECTOR

by: *Britney Norsworthy, Library Director*

A fresh new year is here, and it's great to kick it off with all of you. Many plans and goals are ahead, and the future holds wonderful possibilities for our library.

As we move forward, the focus is on offering fun programs for all ages, expanding the selection of practical items available through the Tool Library, and continuing to bring in the best new books. There's also a strong commitment to strengthening tech services, eBooks, and digital resources to ensure convenient access anytime, anywhere.

It's truly special to be part of the Safety Harbor community. We're grateful for the many community partnerships and supportive groups that help our library thrive, including the Friends of the Library, the Library Foundation, and the Library Advisory Committee. Their dedication makes a tremendous difference in what the library can offer.

Looking ahead, the library is shaping its long-range plan, which will guide us through 2030. As part of this process, a community survey is available, and your input is truly valued as we explore new programs and additional ways to better serve you. Together, we'll continue to grow, learn, and celebrate as a community. Thank you for supporting your library and being part of our shared future!

Be sure to join us for our big event, Links for Our Library Mini-Golf Main Street Festival, on February 28, from 2:00–6:00 p.m. Enjoy a fun day of mini-golf, creatively decorated golf carts, shopping with local vendors, and visiting our terrific restaurants, bars, and shops. It's a wonderful opportunity to enjoy our city and support our library!

## 2025 Library Survey

**WE CARE WHAT YOU  
THINK. HELP US  
IMPROVE BY TAKING  
OUR SURVEY.**

Your Feedback Matters



VISIT: [SAFETYHARBORLIBRARY.COM](http://SAFETYHARBORLIBRARY.COM)  
OR CALL 727-724-1525 X4112 FOR INFO.

**LINKS FOR  
OUR  
LIBRARY**

**MINI-GOLF MAIN STREET FESTIVAL**

**& GOLF CART CRUISE-IN**

**FEBRUARY 28**

**20+ UNIQUE MINI-GOLF HOLES  
CREATIVE GOLF CARTS  
DOZENS OF VENDORS  
AFTER PARTY WITH PRIZES**

**BENEFITS SAFETY HARBOR PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION**



**QUOZCREATIVE.COM/LINKS**

# LIBRARY PROGRAMS

## JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2026

### Story Tots: (Ages 2-5)

Wednesdays, 1/7, 1/14, 1/21,  
1/28, 10:30 a.m.

### Baby & Me Story Time:

(Ages 0-2) Fridays, 1/9, 1/16,  
1/23, 1/30, 10:30 a.m.

### \*Tween Creative Writers

Group: (Ages 8-12)

Wednesdays, 1/14 & 2/11,  
6:00 p.m.

### \*Teen Creative Writers

Group: (Ages 12-18)

Wednesdays, 1/14 & 2/11,  
5:00 p.m.

### \*Tween & Teen D&D:

(Ages 10-16) Wednesdays, 1/7,  
1/21, 2/4, 5:00 p.m.

### Books & Bagels Book Club:

Tuesdays, 1/20 & 2/17,  
10:30 a.m.

### Ukulele JamALONG:

(All ages) Wednesday, 1/21,  
6:15 p.m.

### Comedy Improv Show:

Thursday, 2/5, 6:30 p.m.

### Caring for the Caregiver:

Thursday, 2/29, 1:00 p.m.

**KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR NEW PROGRAMS  
COMING TO YOUR LIBRARY IN THE NEW YEAR!**



\*Register online at [events.safetyharborlibrary.org](http://events.safetyharborlibrary.org)  
101 2nd St N, Safety Harbor, Florida 34695  
(727) 724-1525 [www.SafetyHarborLibrary.com](http://www.SafetyHarborLibrary.com)



# LEISURE SERVICES: AN ESSENTIAL PIECE OF OUR COMMUNITY

by: Julie Inman, Recreation Director



Our parks, programs, and facilities are more than just amenities; they are an essential part of the fabric that makes Safety Harbor a vibrant and thriving place to live. The value of our Leisure Services Department is immeasurable, extending well beyond simple fun and games into the core areas of personal and community well-being.

**Physical Wellness:** Access to park and recreation is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. Our programs and green spaces provide the ideal setting for physical activity, which is proven to:

- Reduce the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.
- Combat stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Help maintain strength, flexibility, and independent living, especially for our seniors.

Simply put, the opportunities offered through your Leisure Services Department directly help residents live longer, healthier, and more active lives.

**Mental Well Being:** In today's fast-paced world, finding moments of peace is crucial. Our parks and natural areas, offer a sanctuary from urban life. Studies show that contact with nature:

- Reduces stress, lowers cortisol levels, and improves mood.
- Enhances cognitive function, concentration, and attention capacity.
- Fosters social connections, which helps combat loneliness and isolation.

Whether you're strolling the canopied sidewalks of Main Street or practicing Yoga in a green space, our facilities provide the restorative natural environment needed for a healthy mind.

**Economic Value:** While the physical and mental benefits are priceless, our Leisure Services also deliver significant economic value to our community:

- Proximity to well-maintained parks and recreation facilities consistently correlates with higher residential property values.
- A strong Parks and Recreation system attracts businesses and residents, serving as a prime economic development and relocation magnet.
- Our special events and facilities draw visitors, creating tourism revenue that supports local businesses, from our distinctive shops to our local restaurants.

Parks and Recreation isn't just REAL Fun, it's an intentional investment in the health of our residents, the vibrancy of our neighborhoods, and the economic prosperity of Safety Harbor.

## REAL FUN! EVENTS & PROGRAMS JANUARY & FEBRUARY

### Folly Faire

All Ages, Sat, 1/10, 9 a.m.–12 p.m., FREE, Folly Farm  
All Ages, Sat, 2/14, 9 a.m.–12 p.m., FREE, Folly Farm

### Best Lil Race

Ages 2-8, Thu, 2/5, 4–5 p.m., FREE, Waterfront Park  
(Use Jefferson entrance)

### Daddy Daughter Date Night

Ages 4-10, Sat, 2/7, 6–9 p.m., \$30/couple,  
Community Ctr.

### Pancakes in the Park

All Ages, Sat, 2/28, 8 a.m.–12 p.m., FREE, Folly Farm Gazebo

# JANUARY FITNESS BINGO



## How to participate:

Starting in January, pick up your BINGO card when you attend a fitness class or visit the Fitness Center.

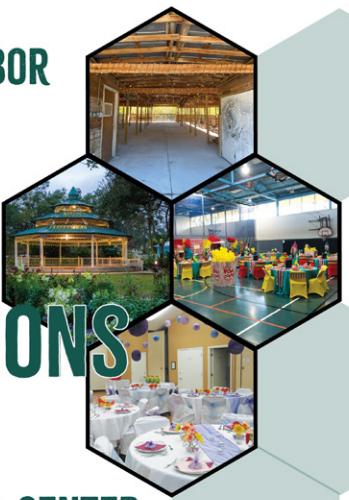
Each time you complete a square on your BINGO card, get a sticker from the front desk to mark your spot.

Get a BINGO in any direction by January 31<sup>st</sup> and return your completed card to front desk staff with your contact info.

We'll contact you when your prize is ready to be picked up!

## CITY OF SAFETY HARBOR

# PARKS & FACILITIES RESERVATIONS



## COMMUNITY CENTER MUSEUM & CULTURAL CENTER

## RIGSBY RECREATION CENTER

## FOLLY FARM FARMHOUSE • GAZEBO • BARN • FIRE PIT

JOHN WILSON PARK GAZEBO  
SHELTERS • PARKS • FIELD RENTALS



SAFETYHARBORRECREATION.COM • 727-724-1560

# Safety Harbor Senior EXPO

February 10<sup>th</sup>

10am-12:30pm • Free  
Community Center

## visit with:

- Aging Services
- Caregiver Services
- Financial Services
- Health Care
- Health & Wellness
- Home Renovations
- Housing Options
- Recreational Activities
- Travel Services
- Volunteering

**SafetyHarborRecreation.com**



# TOUCH A TRUCK



Sat., Feb. 21 **FREE!**  
9am-12pm

Safety Harbor City Park  
940 7th St. S. • 727-724-1560

**safetyharborrecreation.com**



CityScape is a publication of the City of Safety Harbor. For the latest updates on these and other stories visit us online at [cityofsafetyharbor.com](http://cityofsafetyharbor.com).

## CITY OFFICIALS

Joe Ayoub, Mayor  
Carlos Diaz, Vice Mayor  
Nancy Besore, Commissioner  
Jacob Burnett, Commissioner  
Andy Steingold, Commissioner  
Josh M. Stefancic, City Manager

## CITY DIRECTORY

City Hall: 727-724-1555  
Community Center: 727-724-1560  
Fire Department: 727-724-1520  
Folly Farm: 727-724-1552  
Library: 727-724-1525  
Museum & Cultural Center: 727-724-1562  
Public Works: 727-724-1550  
Rigsby Recreation Center: 727-724-1545



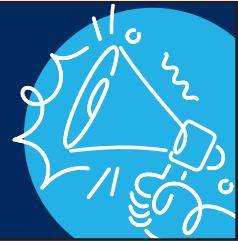
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Safety Harbor, Florida 34695

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## APPLY TODAY! Finance Advisory Committee

[CityofSafetyHarbor.com/boards](http://CityofSafetyHarbor.com/boards)

The Finance Advisory Committee is looking for volunteers! This committee is made up of residents who help monitor city budgets, review millage rates, existing fee structures for City services, documented systems of internal control, and make key recommendations to the City Commission.



## We're Looking For Volunteers



Paint Your Heart Out Safety Harbor (PYHOSH) is a local non-profit organization that enables citizens to lend a helping hand by painting the exteriors of houses, cleaning the yards and doing minor external repairs for homeowners in need.

PAINT DAY IS MARCH 7, 2026.

We are beginning to take volunteers. Please sign up at  
<https://tinyurl.com/pyhosh2026>

- You must be at least 14 years old (teens aged 14-17 will need a parental consent form).
- If you have family or friends you'd like to paint with, be sure to sign up on the same house number.
- Addresses will be provided at breakfast on Paint Day.

EMAIL: [PYHOSH@GMAIL.COM](mailto:PYHOSH@GMAIL.COM)  
OR CALL: 727-380-0626  
OR VISIT:  
[FACEBOOK.COM/PAINTYOURHEARTSH](http://FACEBOOK.COM/PAINTYOURHEARTSH)



## 2026 Quarterly Clean Up Schedule\*



**Spring Clean Up: March 9 – 11**

**Hurricane Prep Clean Up: June 8 – 10**

**End-of-Summer Clean Up: September 7 – 9**

**Holiday Clean Up: December 7 – 9**

**For more details  
& what will & won't  
be collected,  
scan the QR Code.**



\* Collection occurs only once during the clean-up cycle. Be sure to place items at the curb by 6:30AM on your regular collection day.