



**ACHOO! IT'S IN THE AIR**

Pine tree pollen makes for a yellow mess and stirs up allergies, 3A.



DAVE BERMAN/FLORIDA TODAY

Brevard County Charter Review Committee members discuss the legality of the cap on property tax increases that now is in the county charter.

## Property tax cap under dispute

DAVE BERMAN  
FLORIDA TODAY

A key provision of Brevard County's charter that limits property tax increases may be illegal.

Yet the Brevard County Charter Review Commission has decided not to do anything about it, indicating the issue is a political hot potato.

Panel members decided they wanted to see if a member of the public challenges the cap in court, rather than the commission seeking to change or eliminate it.

Brevard has a special charter cap that limits budgeted revenue from property taxes to increase by no more than 3 percent from the previous year or the percent change in Consumer Price Index from the previous year — whichever figure is lower — excluding revenue associated with new construction. None of Florida's other 66 counties has such a provision.

Brevard County Commission Chairman Jim Barfield said the charter cap can tie the county's hands in how it can budget.

"You have no leeway at all," Barfield said.

The charter cap was approved by Brevard County voters in 2008, after a previous charter cap was declared unconstitutional in 2004 by the Brevard County Circuit Court and the 5th District Court of Appeal.

Wade Vose, attorney for the Charter Review Commission, on Thursday raised questions about the legality of the 2008 cap, as well as a 2007 special act the Florida Legislature approved that was designed to authorize the cap for Brevard County.

In a memo to Charter Review Commission members, Vose wrote that "the tax cap and procedures set forth" in the county charter "are plainly inconsistent with general law" under Florida statutes.

He cautioned, though, that "analysis of the charter cap involves highly complex areas of the law, many of which have remained ill-defined across more than a century of appellate opinions, which are themselves few and far between. I would suggest that this memorandum cannot provide you with an abiding certainty about the legality of the tax cap or the constitutionality or legality of its enabling special act, absent litigation

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### More on Charter Review Commission

**What it's doing:** The 15-member Brevard County Charter Review Commission is in the midst of examining all parts of the county's charter for possible revision. Any proposal that receives support of at least 10 Charter Review Commission members will be forwarded to the Brevard County Commission for placement on the November ballot. So far, no proposal has met that threshold. The panel has been meeting since August.

**Membership:** Each of the five county commissioners appointed three members to the Charter Review Commission.

**History:** A review of Brevard's charter takes place every six years, and this is the fourth such cycle.

NANCY REAGAN 1921-2016

## A woman of 'style, substance and grace'



AP/FILE

Former first lady Nancy Reagan is seen holding the Reagans' pet, Rex, as she and former President Reagan walk on the White House South lawn in December 1986. The former first lady has died at 94, The Associated Press confirmed Sunday.

### Brevard officials fondly recall former first lady Nancy Reagan, who died

J.D. GALLOP  
FLORIDA TODAY

Brevard County residents and elected officials recalled former first lady Nancy Reagan as a woman of style, substance and grace who knew her way around the political machinations of Washington, D.C.

Reagan died Sunday at age 94.

John Anderson, former chairman of the Brevard County Republican Party, said the former first lady was a "unique individual for a unique time" in American history.

"I thought she was an outstanding first lady and she was an excellent representative, both internationally and domestically, for the citizens of the U.S."

Of note for many was the "Just Say No" campaign spearheaded by Nancy Reagan to buffer the rise of illegal drug use across the nation. She also was a formidable champion of her husband's political viewpoints, especially as he recovered from an assassination attempt and other medical issues during the early part of his two terms as president.

Florida Sen. Thad Altman, a self-described Reagan Republican who was on the county commission when the president visited Melbourne in 1987, said Nancy Reagan's loss was "heartbreaking."

"She was a great partner to Ronald Reagan. They had such a strong relationship. After he was gone, she carried that torch," Altman said. "She had a huge influence in her own right and a leader. She was classy."

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### USA TODAY



GETTY IMAGES/FILE

Former first lady Nancy Reagan speaks during a birthday celebration held in honor of Ronald Reagan at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on Feb. 6, 2011 in Simi Valley, California.

Nancy Reagan never stopped grieving and fighting the disease that took her husband. **1B**

Reagan was pivotal to Ronald's career. **2B**

## For Rubio, it's all about Florida's voters

LEDYARD KING  
USA TODAY NETWORK-FLORIDA

WASHINGTON — Florida, get ready to see lots of Marco Rubio over the next eight days.

With Rubio's presidential fortunes hanging in the balance, he's focusing his time and money on winning his home state's winner-take-all primary on March 15.

"Florida is the priority," Rubio spokesman Alex Conant said.

Trips around Florida are planned, particularly around the voter-rich Interstate 4 corridor connecting Tampa, Orlando and Daytona Beach. And Floridians should brace for a barrage of

pro-Rubio communications as the senator from West Miami makes what some are calling a "last stand" in the Republican nomination race.

Experts agree that if Rubio loses Florida, his bid for the nomination is over. But he'll need all the help he can get, judging by two recent polls showing him trailing businessman Donald Trump by double digits in the race for Florida's 99 delegates.

At Thursday's GOP debate in Detroit, Trump said voters won't forgive Rubio for missing more votes than any other senator as he campaigns for president.

"The people of Florida can't stand him. He couldn't get elected dog catcher," Trump said. "There will be a lot of

advertising. It's the only thing that might save him. But I doubt it."

Rubio campaign officials acknowledge they're trailing Trump in Florida, but by far less than the 16-20 points reported in Quinnipiac University and Public Policy Polling surveys. An Associated Industries of Florida poll shows the difference at only 7 points. Rubio's campaign believes his experience winning statewide will help close the gap quickly — and that the rules restricting the March 15 primary to Republican voters will boost his chances.

"He's going to have to work his butt off in his home state," said Florida GOP

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