CONSENT

5. Potential Long-Term Maintenance Obligations

Routine property acceptances often disguise permanent line-item costs for public works departments.

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Items 15 & 16: Acceptance of Permanent Drainage & Utility Easements (Palmetto & Parrish)

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- **The Concern:** The county is accepting permanent easements from private development entities (*CC Manatee Land Investments, LLC* and *TI Investors of Harrison Ranch Apartments LLC*).
- **The Taxpayer Risk:** While developers present this as a "donation" of land for infrastructure, once the county accepts and records these permanent easements, **the long-term maintenance, clearing, repairing, and structural liabilities shift entirely onto the Manatee County taxpayer.** If a stormwater system fails or a utility line collapses inside these developments ten years from now, the private developer is long gone, and the public faces a massive repair bill.

Items to Watch with "Cautious Optimism"

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- **Item 7 (Infrastructure Sales Tax Amendments):** Ensure that the money being shifted in `B-26-072` and `B-26-078` is actually staying within the citizen-approved project list and isn't being quietly raided to cover the cost overruns found in Items 10 and 11.
- **Item 21 (Buckeye Pretreatment & UIC Well Facility):** This involves the deep injection well system. Any renewal here requires close oversight to ensure the county isn't taking on extra industrial wastewater liabilities from private entities utilizing the facility.

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Here are the specific agenda items that warrant intense taxpayer scrutiny and aggressive questioning:

1. The Cost Overrun Red Flags (Change Orders)

Nothing drains a capital improvement budget faster than serial change orders. When a project hits "Change Order No. 3" or "Change Order No. 9," it usually means the original contract price was unrealistic, or the scope of work is creeping out of control.

10 Item 10: Change Order No. 3 — 44th Avenue East (I-75 to Lakewood Ranch Blvd)

- **The Concern:** The 44th Avenue East extension is one of the most expensive and legally complex thoroughfare projects in the county's history.
- **The Taxpayer Risk:** Why are we on Change Order No. 3 for this specific segment? Is the contractor hitting unexpected utility conflicts, or are design errors forcing taxpayers to foot the bill for revisions? Every change order on a project of this scale represents a compounding cost that pulls money away from other critical infrastructure needs in older parts of the county.

11 Item 11: Change Order No. 9 & Budget Amendment B-26-074 — Lake Manatee Water Treatment Plant Upgrades

- **The Concern: Change Order No. 9 is a massive red flag.** Reaching nine change orders on a single agreement indicates severe project management issues, design flaws, or drastically changing conditions.
- **The Taxpayer Risk:** The fact that this item is explicitly tied to a **Budget Amendment (B-26-074)** means the project has officially blown past its previously allocated budget, and staff is asking the Commission to move money from other accounts to cover the gap. Taxpayers deserve to know the cumulative cost of all nine change orders and exactly why the original engineering estimate missed the mark so badly.

2. Bypassing Competitive Bidding

While legal, procurement shortcuts always deserve extra scrutiny because they reduce the pressure of free-market competition.

8 Item 8: "Piggyback" Blanket Purchase Order for Smoke Testing and I&I Services

- **The Concern:** A "piggyback" contract means Manatee County is bypassing the traditional competitive bidding process by adopting a contract negotiated by another government entity.
- **The Taxpayer Risk:** While piggybacking can save staff time, it means local vendors aren't getting a shot at the work, and the pricing structure might not reflect the best