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Credited with Tavares' revival, Drury gets raise from council for doing a 'fantastic job'

By Chris Gerbasi, Correspondent

TAVARES — City Council members have decided to reward City Administrator John Drury as he works through a lengthy "to-do" list of projects.

Drury typically has been among the highest-paid local government managers in [Lake County](#), and a new 5-percent raise will bring his annual salary to about \$179,458 starting Oct. 1. The City Council approved the increase at a meeting last week.

"I appreciate the confidence that this council has in me to lead this city forward," Drury said.

By comparison to other annual salaries, Clermont City Manager Darren Gray earns \$168,771, Lake County Manager David Heath earns \$155,937, County Attorney Melanie Marsh makes \$152,006, and Leesburg City Manager Al Minner is paid \$145,017.

Drury, who has been city administrator since 2006 [when he came to the city as a result of a search led by Colin Baenziger & Associates], is credited for an ongoing revival in [Tavares](#). Many of the council's goals for Drury revolve around economic development and downtown improvements.

"All of them are priorities. Some are bigger than others in scope," Drury said.

Upcoming large-scale projects include a new \$10 million public safety complex that will serve both the police and fire departments, and Ruby Street reconstruction, which will require Duke Energy to bury overhead power lines, Drury said.

Along the State Road 19 corridor to the south, a new Publix supermarket is under construction and generating additional property sales for both commercial and residential projects, Drury stated in a progress report to the council.

The city also is talking to state officials about the green space near the intersection of S.R. 19 and County Road 561 as a possible gateway feature.

Among other plans, a library expansion is in the works, directional signs for city sites have been installed along U.S. Highway 441 and improvements are in store for the west end of Wooton Park.

Drury also cited repaving of aging roads and preventing pollutants from entering waterways as top priorities.

The discussion of Drury's salary had been tabled at the June 1 meeting, when Councilman Kirby Smith requested the budgeted salaries for other city employees and information on which open job positions would be filled. A 4 percent raise is proposed for city employees.

"We all know that he does a fantastic job," Smith said of Drury. "The city administrator here in the city of Tavares, as we all know, is a CEO. Our property values have increased year over year, our employee morale is extremely high and our [employees'] pay is getting to where it needs to be."

The decision on Drury's raise coincided with the first of several budget workshops. Council members have directed him to increase road funding and reserves, while maintaining the millage rate at or near its current level.

The council, which discussed the proposed general fund budget of about \$15.7 million, will conduct additional workshops at each of its July and August meetings before voting on the final 2016-17 budget in September during public hearings.