

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

BILL #: [HB 4059](#)

TITLE: Sunbridge Stewardship District, Osceola County

SPONSOR(S): Booth

COMPANION BILL: None

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 115 Y's 0 N's

GOVERNOR'S ACTION: Pending

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill amends the boundaries of the Sunbridge Stewardship District (district), an independent special district in Osceola County, to add lands located in the City of Orlando, Orange County. The additional lands would increase the size of the district by 7,310 acres to a total size of approximately 26,870 acres. The bill also revises the district's charter to reflect both the increased size of the district and the addition of lands in Orange County.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The Economic Impact Statement submitted with the bill projects that in the second fiscal year after the bill takes effect, the district will increase revenue by \$1,990,000 and spend \$1,460,000 to provide services to the newly-added areas.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill amends the boundaries of the [Sunbridge Stewardship District \(district\)](#), an independent [special district](#) in Osceola County to add lands located in the City of Orlando, Orange County. The additional lands will increase the size of the district by 7,310 acres to a total size of approximately 26,870 acres. (Section [1](#))

The bill revises the district's charter to reflect the addition of lands in Orange County. These revisions include:

- Requiring the district to abide by utility territory agreements between Orange County and the City of Orlando; and
- Providing that any future amendment to the district's boundaries must only receive consent from the jurisdiction in which the proposed expansion is located. (Section [1](#))

The bill revises the transition schedule for the district's board from being elected by landowners to the qualified electors as follows:

Current Number of Qualified Electors	Number of Qualified Electors as Provided in Bill	Number of Board Members Elected by Landowners	Number of Board Members Elected by Qualified Electors
0-9,999	0-12,474	5	0
10,000-19,999	12,475-22,474	4	1
20,000-29,999	22,475-32,474	3	2
30,000-39,999	32,475-42,474	2	3
40,000-44,999	42,475-46,999	1	4
45,000 or more	47,000 or more	0	5

Subject to the Governor's veto powers, the effective date of this bill is upon becoming a law, except that provisions authorizing the levy of ad valorem taxes take effect only upon approval by a majority vote of qualified electors in a referendum to be held at a general election after such time when all members of the board are elected by and are qualified electors of the district. (Section [2](#))

STORAGE NAME: h4059z.IAS

DATE: 5/8/2025

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

The Economic Impact Statement submitted with the bill projects that in the second fiscal year after the bill takes effect, the district will increase revenue by \$1,990,000 and spend \$1,460,000 to provide services to the newly-added areas.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Special Districts

A “special district” is a unit of local government created for a particular purpose, with jurisdiction to operate within a limited geographic boundary.¹ Special districts are created by general law, special act, local ordinance, or rule of the Governor and Cabinet.² A special district has only those powers expressly provided by, or reasonably implied from, the authority provided in the district’s charter. Special districts provide specific municipal services in addition to, or in place of, those provided by a municipality or county.³ Special districts are funded through the imposition of ad valorem taxes, fees, or charges on the users of those services as authorized by law.⁴

Special districts may be classified as dependent or independent based on their relationship with local general-purpose governments. A special district is classified as “dependent” if the governing body of a single county or municipality:

- Serves as governing body of the district;
- Appoints the governing body of the district;
- May remove members of the district’s governing body at-will during their unexpired terms; or
- Approves or can veto the budget of the district.⁵

A district is classified as “independent” if it does not meet any of the above criteria or is located in more than one county, unless the district lies entirely within the boundaries of single municipality.⁶

Special districts are governed generally by the Uniform Special District Accountability Act (USDAA).⁷ The USDAA centralizes provisions governing special districts and applies to the formation,⁸ governance,⁹ administration,¹⁰ supervision,¹¹ merger,¹² and dissolution¹³ of special districts, unless otherwise expressly provided in law.¹⁴ The

¹ See *Halifax Hospital Medical Center v. State of Fla., et al.*, 278 So. 3d 545, 547 (Fla. 2019).

² See ss. [189.02\(1\)](#), [189.031\(3\)](#), and [190.005\(1\)](#), F.S. See generally [s. 189.012\(6\)](#), F.S.

³ Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee, *Local Government Formation Manual*, p. 56 (last visited Mar. 15, 2025).

⁴ The method of financing a district must be stated in its charter. Ss. [189.02\(4\)\(g\)](#) and [189.031\(3\)](#), F.S. Independent special districts may be authorized to impose ad valorem taxes as well as non-ad valorem special assessments in the special acts comprising their charters. See, e.g., [ch. 2023-335, s. 1\(6\)](#), *Laws of Fla.* (East River Ranch Stewardship District). See also, e.g., ss. [190.021](#) (community development districts), [191.009](#) (independent fire control districts), [197.3631](#) (non-ad valorem assessments), [298.305](#) (water control districts), and [388.221](#), F.S. (mosquito control). See also [ch. 2004-397, s. 3\(27\)](#), *Laws of Fla.* (South Broward Hospital District).

⁵ S. [189.012\(2\)](#), F.S.

⁶ S. [189.012\(3\)](#), F.S.

⁷ S. [189.01](#), F.S., but see ch. 190, F.S. (community development districts), ch. 191, F.S. (independent special fire control districts), ch. 298, F.S. (water control districts), ch. 388, F.S. (mosquito control districts), and ch. 582, F.S. (soil and water conservation districts).

⁸ See ss. [189.02](#) (creation of dependent special districts) and [189.031](#), F.S. (creation of independent special districts).

⁹ See [s. 189.0311](#), F.S. (charter requirements for independent special districts).

¹⁰ See [s. 189.019](#), F.S. (requiring codification of charters incorporating all special acts for the district).

¹¹ See [s. 189.0651](#), F.S. (oversight for special districts created by special act of the Legislature).

¹² Ss. [189.071](#) and [189.074](#), F.S.

¹³ Ss. [189.071](#) and [189.072](#), F.S.

¹⁴ See, e.g., [s. 190.004](#), F.S. (Ch. 190, F.S. as “sole authorization” for creation of community development districts).

USDAA requires notice and publication of tentative budgets and final budgets.¹⁵ Certain budget amendments are allowed up to 60 days following the end of the fiscal year.¹⁶

Special districts do not possess “home rule” powers and may impose only those taxes, assessments, or fees authorized by special or general law. The special act creating an independent special district may provide for funding from a variety of sources while prohibiting others. For example, ad valorem tax authority is not mandatory for a special district.¹⁷

Sunbridge Stewardship District

The Sunbridge Stewardship District (district) is an independent special district created in 2017.¹⁸ The district covers land in Osceola County and its purpose is to provide infrastructure for a comprehensive community development approach that facilitates an integral relationship among regional transportation, land use, and urban design, creating a diverse mix of housing and regional employment and economic development opportunities, rather than fragmented development with underutilized infrastructure which is generally associated with urban sprawl.¹⁹ The district is authorized to provide district services extraterritorially upon execution of an interlocal agreement.²⁰

The district is governed by a five-member board of supervisors (board) elected by the landowners on a one-acre, one-vote basis to serve four-year terms.²¹ As qualified electors move into the district, members will be chosen in an election of the qualified electorate rather than at a landowners’ meeting, and once 45,000 qualified electors reside within the district, all five members will be elected by the qualified electorate.²²

The district is authorized to levy ad valorem taxes but only after all members of the board are elected on a popular vote basis and the levy of ad valorem taxes is approved by the district voters in a subsequent referendum.²³ In addition, the district may levy user charges and fees, non-ad valorem maintenance taxes as authorized by general law, maintenance special assessments, and benefit special assessments.²⁴

The district’s charter provides that the charter may only be amended by special act of the Legislature. However, the board may not ask the Legislature to amend its charter without first obtaining a resolution or official statement from Manatee County stating the amendment is consistent with approved local government plans of the county and that the county has no objection to the amendment.²⁵ The district received this consent.²⁶

Local Bill Forms

The Florida Constitution prohibits the passage of any special act unless a notice of intention to seek enactment of the bill has been published as provided by general law or the act is conditioned to take effect only upon approval by referendum vote of the electors in the area affected.²⁷ A legal advertisement of the proposed bill must be placed in a newspaper of general circulation or published on a publicly accessible website²⁸ at least 30 days prior to the

¹⁵ S. [189.016\(4\), F.S.](#)

¹⁶ S. [189.016\(6\), F.S.](#)

¹⁷ See, e.g., [ch. 2006-354, Laws of Fla.](#) (Argyle Fire District may impose special assessments, but has no ad valorem tax authority).

¹⁸ [Ch. 2017-220, Laws of Fla.](#)

¹⁹ [Ch. 2017-220, s. 2\(1\)\(b\), Laws of Fla.](#)

²⁰ [Ch. 2017-220, s. 3\(4\), Laws of Fla.](#)

²¹ [Ch. 2017-220, s. 5, Laws of Fla.](#)

²² [Ch. 2017-220, s. 5\(3\)\(a\)2.a\(V\), Laws of Fla.](#)

²³ [Ch. 2017-220, ss. 5\(3\)\(a\)1. and 6\(12\)\(a\), Laws of Fla.](#) The district currently does not levy ad valorem taxes.

²⁴ [Ch. 2017-220, ss. 6\(6\)\(i\) and 6\(12\), Laws of Fla.](#)

²⁵ [Ch. 2017-220, s. 2\(3\)\(f\), Laws of Fla.](#) See also s. [189.031\(2\)\(e\)4., F.S.](#)

²⁶ See Osceola County Board of County Commissioners, [Resolution #25-015R](#), (Feb. 17, 2025).

²⁷ [Art. III, s. 10, Fla. Const.](#)

²⁸ S. [50.0311\(2\), F.S.](#)

introduction of the local bill in the House or Senate.²⁹ The bill was noticed in the [Orlando Sentinel on January 27, 2025](#).

The House local bill policy requires a completed and signed Local Bill Certification Form and Economic Impact Statement Form be filed with the Clerk of the House at the time the local bill is filed or as soon thereafter as possible.³⁰ Under the policy, a committee or subcommittee may not consider a local bill unless these forms have been filed. The following forms have been submitted for the bill:

- [Local Bill Certification Form](#)
- [Economic Impact Statement Form](#)

²⁹ S. [11.02, F.S.](#) If there is no newspaper circulated throughout or published in the county and no publicly accessible website has been designated, notice must be posted for at least 30 days in at least three public places in the county, one of which must be at the courthouse.

³⁰ Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee, [Local Bill Policies and Procedures Manual](#), p. 11 (last visited Mar. 15, 2025).