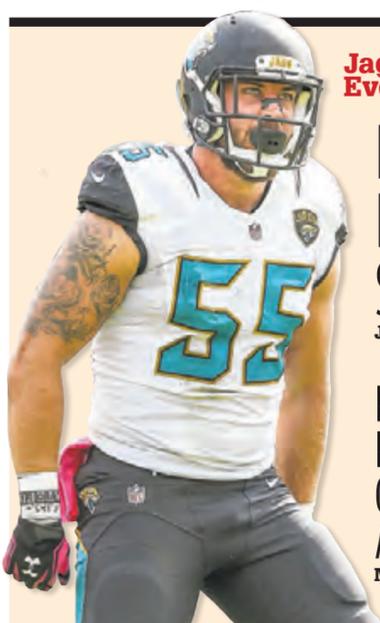


The Florida Times-Union

Sunday
NOVEMBER 29, 2015
\$3



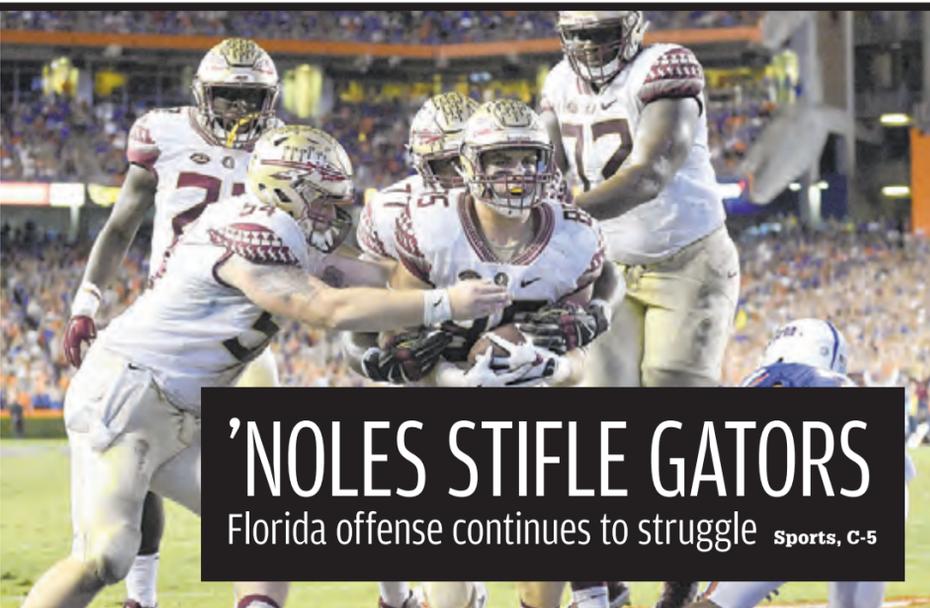
Jags vs. Chargers • 1 p.m.
EverBank Field • CBS-TV

HOW THE JAGS PREPARE TO STAY HEALTHY

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PLANNED PARENTHOOD GUNMAN A RECLUSE

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'NOLES STIFLE GATORS

Florida offense continues to struggle Sports, C-5

New Amphitheater, Jaguars Indoor Practice Facility

CURRY PLAN TO PAY NOT WITHOUT RISK



An artist rendering of the indoor practice facility and amphitheater the Jaguars and Mayor Lenny Curry want to build on the south side of EverBank Field.

Tapping city bed tax money for new facilities could leave taxpayers on the hook down the line

By Nate Monroe & Christopher Hong
The Times-Union

Mayor Lenny Curry says his \$45 million proposal to help the owner of the Jacksonville Jaguars build an amphitheater and indoor practice facility can be paid for by tourists and without affecting basic city services.

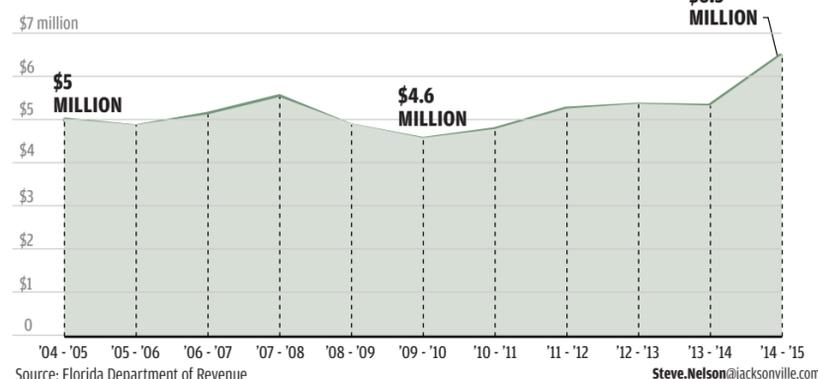
However, budget figures, financial projections and historical tax data show that Curry plans to squeeze dry the remaining money from a tourism tax trust fund designated for maintenance of Jacksonville's major sports facilities. At the same time, the private operator in charge of running the city-owned buildings estimates more than \$72 million worth of maintenance will be needed in the next five years.

That means local taxpayers could be on the hook for substantial future maintenance expenses that city officials would ultimately have to weigh against basic services such as public safety, the centerpiece priority of the mayor's first term.

PLAN continues on A-4

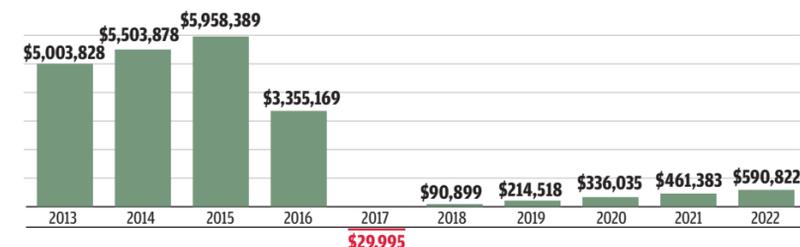
Bed tax revenue

Jacksonville assesses a 6 percent hotel tax, charged to hotel guests. One-third of that tax – commonly referred to as the bed tax – is dedicated to a sports complex trust fund financing improvements at the stadium, arena and baseball park. The tax has proven to be an inconsistent revenue generator, fluctuating between \$4.6 million and \$6.5 million per year over the last decade.



Projected bed tax revenue at 2 percent annual growth

Now, Mayor Lenny Curry wants to use the tax revenue to pay off debt on a proposed \$45 million investment in an amphitheater and indoor practice facility for the Jaguars. By 2017, when debt payments on the scoreboards and the proposed amphitheater/practice field project fully kick in, there will be no money left to pay for annual maintenance on the city's sports facilities. It's not clear how the city will make up that deficit.



Note: These figures are based on financial projections from the mayor's office. They assume bed tax collections will grow at 2 percent each year, which it says is an "ultra conservative" estimate. But historic data from the state show the bed tax has been an inconsistent source of money over the last decade.

UF Health bucks trend in budget from Scott

\$19M boost earmarked for Jacksonville hospital; Baptist may be cut \$10M

By David Bauerlein
david.bauerlein@jacksonville.com

UF Health Jacksonville appeared headed for a bruising session in the Legislature because funding for hospitals is falling across the state.

But after Gov. Rick Scott unveiled his proposed 2016-17 budget on Monday, analysts digging into the numbers found a surprising bottom line for the Jacksonville hospital, which cares for the biggest share of poor and uninsured patients in Northeast Florida.

UF Health Jacksonville stands to gain an additional \$19 million under Scott's budget, according to the Florida Alliance of Safety Net Hospitals, an organization that represents UF Health and other hospitals that treat large numbers of poor patients.

UF Health Jacksonville, located on Eighth Street north of downtown, is netting about \$103 million from this year's state budget. Scott's budget for the fiscal year starting July 1 would increase that amount by \$19 million.

Even though the overall amount of money to help hospitals is shrinking statewide, UF Health Jacksonville "actually comes out better," said Tony Carvalho, president of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance. He said the methodology Scott used to direct money didn't result in gains for all safety-net hospitals.

"There are some safety-net hospitals that were hurt and we certainly want the Legislature to revisit that," Carvalho said. "It did help some of the safety-net hospitals, and certainly [UF Health Jacksonville] was one of them." He said health-care spending in

UF HEALTH continues on A-4

Taking care of nieces, daughter part of woman's daily struggle

She keeps household on limited monthly sum from Social Security

By Cindy Schriver
For the Times-Union

Sixty-one-year-old Georgetta Edwards has been a caregiver most of her adult life.

She's cared for her mother, who died of congestive



heart failure in the mid-2000s.

She helped care for her grandmother and her aunt before their deaths.

Edwards was the rock recently who helped her younger sister, Lillian Harris, as she fought what would be a losing battle

against stomach cancer. Harris died in March.

Now, Edwards is caring for her sister's two children, Semaj, 10, and Jasmine, 9.

She's also the main caregiver for her daughter, Ateasha Edwards, 24, who suffers from cognitive and emotional difficulties.

"I am just so worn out," she said. "But it's so gratifying, even with my sister

EDWARDS continues on A-4



Georgetta Edwards (second from right) has been an effective caregiver, taking care of sisters (from left) Jasmine Harris and Semaj Harris and also her daughter, Ateasha Edwards (right).

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PLAN

Continued from A-1

“That’s certainly the risk,” said Jacksonville City Council President Greg Anderson. “That’s why I think it’s important next week for council members to have an opportunity to really understand what the plan is.”

Each of the council’s five committees will review the plan. If it clears the committee process, it could be ready for the council’s final vote on Dec. 8.

Figures produced by Curry’s office acknowledge that a debt-financed amphitheater and practice facility next to EverBank Field could deplete — as soon as 2017 — the sports-complex trust fund that finances improvements at the stadium, arena and baseball park.

In response to questions, Curry’s spokeswoman provided a written statement. “We are fully able to meet the capital improvement needs of the city-owned sports facility,” Marsha Oliver wrote. “While we find the bed tax helpful and are very fortunate to have this dedicated stream of funding available, we are not reliant on these dollars.”

CURRY’S PLAN

Jacksonville assesses a 6-percent Convention and Tourist Development Tax on hotel rooms and other accommodations rented for six months or less. A third of that revenue goes to the sports complex trust fund that Curry proposes using to finance the long-term debt for the city’s share of the \$45 million cost. By state law, revenue from the tourism tax cannot be used for basic city services but instead must be used for tourism-related expenses.

That, Curry has said, is one reason why the proposal would be a win-win for the Jaguars and the city, which could remain focused on its critical budget items while also paying for a transformational project.

Artist renderings show a sleek, modern design for the practice facility, which is expected to cost \$20 million. The amphitheater, which is expected to cost \$45 million, would be an open-air venue with a roof and would include 4,000 to 5,000 fixed seats and additional ground seating. The Jaguars also plan to improve the stadium’s club seating area, which would cost \$25 million.

BREATHING ROOM?

Since announcing the project, Curry hasn’t publicly said — and the financial analysis does not spell out — how he would compensate for any potential tax-revenue shortfall or whether he has a plan



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Everything from maintaining EverBank Field’s new giant video scoreboards to adding extra seats for the Florida-Georgia game are currently paid for by the city bed tax — the same tax Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry wants to tap to pay for a new Jaguars indoor practice facility and amphitheater next to the stadium.

to pay any maintenance expenses at the city’s sports facilities beyond using general fund money. Curry’s office has previously argued that growth in the tourism-tax revenue would give the city breathing room in future years.

Over the last decade, however, that tourism tax has proved to be an inconsistent source of cash, according to state Department of Revenue data. Four times in the last 10 years tax collections declined — in one year by more than 11 percent.

Maintenance costs for the existing sports facilities wouldn’t be the only pressure on the city budget. The amphitheater and practice facility would come with maintenance requirements of their own. The 4,092-seat St. Augustine Amphitheatre, for example, has cost St. Johns County about \$160,000 in annual maintenance expenses.

The amphitheater and practice facility, along with improvements to the stadium’s luxury club seating area, would cost \$90 million, with the Jaguars putting up the remaining \$45 million. Curry has argued this bolsters the city’s investment considerably in the facilities, which the city would own.

Most of the money those buildings could generate, however, wouldn’t go into city coffers. Under the proposed agreement, Jaguars owner Shad Khan’s company, American Thunder, would cover all the operating costs for the two venues and keep all ticket, concession and other revenues earned from events.

The city’s only source of revenue would be a ticket surcharge that has not yet been set. That money would be pledged toward the upkeep of the facilities and would be matched by the Jaguars. It’s unclear if that would be enough to cover the yearly expenses.

Past taxpayer-funded

upgrades to EverBank Field have proved to have hidden costs.

Stadium maintenance and electrical costs related to upgrades such as the new scoreboards jumped \$1.7 million last year. The money used to finance the scoreboards as well as the new pool and cabana are being financed by the same tourism tax fund Curry wants to use for the amphitheater and practice facility.

That project, too, came with an unanticipated cost: The city had to pay \$1.6 million to install temporary seats necessary to host the annual Florida-Georgia college football game because the pool and cabana areas removed a chunk of seats.

Hidden costs aside, the stadium has required additional city dollars. This year \$4.7 million was transferred from the general fund — which pays for basic city services — to meet costs at EverBank Field.

REVENUE PROJECTIONS

The tourism tax has generated between \$4.6 million and \$6.5 million per year over the last decade for City Hall.

Two years ago, Mayor Alvin Brown pushed a plan through the City Council that pledged some of that revenue to finance the scoreboard improvements, which cost \$43 million. At the time, the city estimated the yearly debt service would cost about \$3 million per year, leaving about \$1.4 million in yearly maintenance for the stadium and \$600,000 each for the arena and baseball park. The actual debt service cost has proved to be a bit higher, at \$3.4 million per year.

Curry’s administration estimates the annual debt service cost on the \$45 million amphitheater and practice facility construction would total \$2.6 million per year, leaving vir-

tually nothing for annual maintenance. In fact, by 2017 Curry’s own financial estimates show that the sports complex trust fund would bottom out with a negative balance of \$29,995. Last fiscal year, that fund had more than \$5.9 million available for maintenance.

If tourism tax revenues grow at 2 percent per year — which Curry’s office says is an “ultra conservative” projection — the fund would only have \$590,822 available for maintenance by 2022.

MAINTENANCE COSTS

For the years when the money available to pay maintenance is at its lowest, the stadium’s manager, SMG, has estimated that the stadium, arena and baseball park will need \$72 million in maintenance over the next five years.

These aren’t the kind of eye-popping improvements or fan-experience upgrades that draw more people to games. The list boils down to basic mechanical and electrical maintenance issues. One big ticket item, for example, is \$3 million in work on EverBank’s chilled-water system. Grease traps, hand rails, condiments counters, elevators and escalators — those are the items that will make up the many millions more in costs.

A city spokeswoman noted several caveats with SMG’s list.

“It has not been vetted or concluded as to whether all is required and when SMG says it is required,” Tia Ford, a city communications officer, said in an email.

“These matters are typically reviewed each year during the budget-preparation process when review and analysis are conducted, and decisions are made on what actually gets priority based on facility conditions, priorities and available funding.”

PRESENTATIONS COMING

Council members will have the chance to review the funding plan and ask questions beginning Monday with a meeting of the Finance committee. Since the bill must pass through each council committee, every council member will have the chance to participate in the preliminary review.

The City Council Auditor’s Office will also present to council members and address any questions or concerns they have about the deal. Council Auditor Kirk Sherman declined to comment on the plan until his office makes its presentation.

Councilman John Crescimbeni said he’s spoken with auditors and didn’t hear any major concerns from them.

“They have a tendency to be overly conservative,” Crescimbeni said. “I’ve been trying to maintain a dialogue with them so I won’t get surprised on Monday, and so far they seem to be OK with everything.”

Anderson, the council president, said he has several questions: Is the funding for the plan nailed down? Is there a plan to continue paying for routine maintenance of the sports complex? What happens if the tourism tax revenue falls short of expectations?

Anderson said the Jaguars are still pushing for the deal to be approved at the council’s final meeting of the year, on Dec. 8, in order to meet a tight construction schedule. Completion is set for July.

“That doesn’t mean the council shouldn’t be careful vetting this project, and we intend to do that,” Anderson said.

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UF HEALTH

Continued from A-1

the state budget is complex and “we don’t have all the answers” yet in how Scott’s proposed budget would affect hospitals.

UF Health Jacksonville officials declined comment on Scott’s proposal. The hospital referred questions to the Safety Net Hospital Alliance.

A major reason for the reduction in spending statewide is the federal government is capping spending on the Low-Income Pool program at \$608 million for 2016-17, which is down from \$1 billion this year.

The Low-Income Pool, known as LIP, mixes federal, state and local tax dollars to help hospitals treat poor and uninsured patients.

In the case of UF Health Jacksonville, the hospital would basically get about the same amount from the LIP program in Scott’s budget.

In addition, Scott’s budget would curtail Medicaid payments to hospitals whose overall profit margins are higher than the statewide average of 9.8 percent. That provision would reduce payments to hospitals by about \$200 million.

UF Health Jacksonville’s total profit margin was just 0.5 percent in 2014, which was well below the state average, so the hospital faces no penalty for having an above-average margin.

Finally, Scott would rewrite how the state allocates money from the disproportionate share program, another federal program that is intended to help hospitals with large number of poor and uninsured patients.

Carvalho said Scott would steer the disproportionate share money toward teaching hospitals and public hospitals. Carvalho said that program is driving the increase for UF Health in Scott’s proposed budget.

While Scott’s approach to funding for hospitals would help UF Health Jacksonville, it would have the reverse impact on Baptist Medical Center in Jacksonville.

Baptist Medical Center would face a reduction of about \$10.4 million in 2016-17, which would eliminate a big chunk of what it gets. This year, Baptist Medical Center is netting \$14.3 million from various programs, according to state budget documents.

Baptist Medical Center’s total profit margin was 20.8 percent in 2014, which is far above the statewide average, and that made it a lower-priority hospital for state help in Scott’s proposed budget.

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EDWARDS

Continued from A-1

[being ill]. And that was unbelievably difficult.”

Edwards maintains her household on a limited monthly sum from Social Security for the girls and herself.

With that she must maintain two houses, one that she had bought before her sister’s death and her late sister’s home. Edwards said she lives in her sister’s house to provide her nieces with stability.

Although the family can meet most monthly obligations, there’s little left for Edwards to buy simple but necessary things, like clothes for her sister’s ever-growing children.

She also needs help with repairs on the family car.

In addition, Edwards would like to seek medical help for Ateasha to help discover why she has undergone such a drastic personality change in recent years.

“She’s withdrawn and stays in her room,” Edwards said of her daughter. “It’s so drastic and it’s so painful.”

Meanwhile, Edwards’ two nieces, who attend Changing Lives Christian Academy, deal with their mother’s death.

“Academically they’re both suffering,” she said. “For two to three years we were just fighting the cancer.”

Despite all her worries, Edwards has big hopes

“Thank you, Lord, for giving [me] my family — and giving me the strength to be a caregiver to them.”

Georgetta Edwards

for her two nieces. “I love these girls just like they were my own,” she said.

Amazingly, Edwards juggles all of those major, pressing daily challenges while battling her own serious health concerns. She has sickle cell anemia and was placed on permanent disability a few years ago.

She attributed her ability to stand strong and handle all that has been upon her to a higher power.

“Thank you, Lord,” Edwards said, “for giving [me] my family — and giving me the strength to be a caregiver to them.”

Life hasn’t always been this difficult for Edwards.

A Jacksonville native, she graduated with a degree in early education from Bethune-Cookman College.

Eventually, Edwards and her husband moved to Orlando for a time, where two of her three children were born. While in Orlando, Edwards became ill and was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, which began the trail of health woes that later saw her

become permanently disabled.

And after she and her husband divorced, Edwards moved back to Jacksonville to be back with her family. Fittingly, it’s family who’s now at the center of every decision that Edwards makes.

In order to make sure her sister’s children are always cared for, even if something happens to her, Edwards has been speaking with her only son, Richard, about sharing custody of her nieces to make sure that they will always have a loving home. A member of the Navy, Edwards’ son is preparing for an overseas deployment.

Whatever happens, she’s determined to make sure she sticks to the vow she gave her dying sister — that her nieces would always have a safe and welcoming home.

“If I tell you I’m going to do something, then I’m completely dedicated,” she said.

“Your word is your bond. And I stand by that.”

How to contribute

The Hope Fund is a joint effort of The Florida Times-Union, UNF and HandsOn Jacksonville. Money will be distributed among the participating agencies, which will purchase gifts or necessities for the families.



The Hope Fund only accepts monetary donations. Every dollar you contribute goes directly to the people who need your help. Contributions are tax deductible.

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Jacksonville, FL
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(904) 332-6767
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Monday through Friday

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A donation box is located in the Times-Union lobby at 1 Riverside Ave. Hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. workdays. To donate by credit card, see hopefund.org. Only monetary donations accepted for this fund.

Thank you for your support!

NSA halts collection of phone call data

The Baltimore Sun

BALTIMORE | The National Security Agency ended Saturday its dragnet collection of data on phone calls that use domestic carriers — the most significant change in U.S. intelligence-gathering since Edward Snowden revealed details of the agency’s programs two years ago.

Under the Patriot Act approved by Congress after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the NSA had been permitted to gather records about phone calls and hunt through them to discover connections to al-Qaida and other groups.

The legal authority for that system expired Saturday. Under a new law, the NSA must ask phone companies for records on a case-by-case basis.

That gives the agency access to a greater volume of phone records than before. The end of the program is a victory for Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor, and his supporters, who say the NSA has too much power to gather data on the everyday lives of Americans.

Official reviews of the program concluded that it had not helped uncover a single terrorist plot and offered few benefits.