CFO says Nassau County exceeded budget by $53M, marking the highest increase among 12 local governments

FERNANDINA BEACH, Fl. – Florida Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia made a stop in Fernandina Beach to call out a property tax issue that has caused Nassau County to overspend more than $53 million in tax dollars.

“It’s a big number for a relatively small county,” he said, noting that the county’s total budget increase across five years soared by 96.8% ($96.2 million), marking the highest increase across 12 other counties his office has reviewed.

The presentation was the latest in what Ingoglia calls a “Fiscal Accountability Tour.”

As a part of the process, Ingoglia said his office takes the 2019-2020 pre-COVID budget and indexed it to today. He said that calculation is used in other states and accounts for inflation and population growth. Looking at the entire general budget, he said his office concluded that Nassau County’s government has been overspending taxpayers’ dollars by $53,031,730.

In his presentation, Ingoglia emphasized the need for property tax reform and accountability in local government spending.

He argued that local governments used “scare tactics” about cutting funding for police and fire departments and insisted essential public safety should be prioritized over administrative growth.

He acknowledged Nassau County’s growth in the past five years but said the 16,597-population increase did not justify the budget increase.

He proposed a decrease in the millage rate to return money to taxpayers. A 0.95 millage reduction could translate to about $380 in annual savings for a $400,000 household, $475 for a $500,000 household and $570 for a $600,000, according to Ingoglia.

“Property tax reform is needed, property tax reform is wanted, and tax reform is absolutely 100% possible,” he said.

He also encouraged residents to understand that government regulation starts with the constitution and laws, pointing to the ballot in 2026.

He proposed various measures to make government more accountable and fiscally responsible, including posting state officials’ contracts online and requiring amendments to be publicized in advance.

He also suggested triggering audits for local governments that vote to raise taxes, providing taxpayers with information on excessive spending on the ballot.

“If a local government or school board, any taxing entity whatsoever, votes to put a tax question on the ballot and ask you to raise your taxes, then it automatically triggers an audit from my office,” he said.

News4JAX has reached out to the Board of County Commissioners for comment on this story and will update this story when it is received.

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