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NEWS, 4A

PANAMA CITY

NEWS HERALD

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2025 | NEWSHERALD.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



Panama City commissioners approved a contract with RedSpeed Florida to implement and oversee speed detection systems in local school zones. TYLER ORSBURN/NEWS HERALD

City OKs speed detection systems in school zones

Nathan Cobb
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

PANAMA CITY – The city is taking a stricter approach to reduce speeding in school zones.

In a meeting on Sept. 24, Panama City commissioners voted 4-1 to approve a contract with RedSpeed Florida LLC to implement and oversee speed detection systems in local school zones. This will be done at no cost to the city.

The contract allows for RedSpeed to add detection systems in up to 11 school zones within the city's limits that were identified as being hotspots for speeding drivers. Officials, however, have yet to determine the exact number of schools where they will be installed.

"(RedSpeed) continues to support a growing list of approximately 100 satisfied local government partners who are successfully using (its) solution to dramatically reduce school-zone speeding

at no cost to the taxpayers," City Manager Jonathan Hayes said. "Examples of ongoing relations in the state of Florida today are Hillsborough County, Miami-Dade County, Sarasota, Cape Coral (and) Fort Walton Beach."

According to information from the city, officials hope for detection systems to be in place by the start of 2026. There then will be a warning period that will span about a month, with tickets being issued to speeding drivers sometime in early February.

The systems will flag drivers traveling more than 10 mph over the speed limit. That data will then be reviewed by multiple people, and if given the OK, will result in a \$100 fine for the offender. Of each issued ticket, RedSpeed will keep \$21.

According to the agenda, "the ticketing system will operate 30 minutes before school, during the school day and 30 minutes after school." Commissioners are considering limiting the hours of op-

eration at certain schools based on need.

The use of such technologies is possible thanks to House Bill 657, which was signed into law in 2023.

As part of the contract, RedSpeed will "install and maintain at least one speed warning sign with a flashing yellow beacon" in each monitored zone.

The city's agreement with RedSpeed is slated to span three years, during which time officials can terminate the contract at any time with a 30-day notice. If terminated, RedSpeed is responsible for removing all speed detection equipment.

"There are three verification processes before a notice of violation is mailed," Greg Parks, who spoke on behalf of RedSpeed during the Sept. 24 meeting, said. "Two humans at RedSpeed will verify it, and then a Panama City police officer will review it. ... There's a lot of fail-safes and processes in place."

Tackle U.S. budget at Gulf Coast State event

Tyler Orsburn
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

On Sept. 29, Bay County residents will get a unique chance to learn how to balance the national budget by roleplaying as lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

This free interactive event at Gulf Coast State College challenges attendees to debate, prioritize programs and negotiate tough choices while discovering the complexities of managing the nation's finances.

Phil Smith, national field director at Concord Coalition, will lead the interactive budget exercise at 6 p.m. on the third floor of the college's Charles Hilton Technology Center. The event lasts two hours and is in collaboration with the Bay County Chamber of Commerce and the League of Women Voters of Bay County.

The Peter G. Peterson Foundation reports that today's national debt is

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Festival celebrating color, creativity returns Nov. 7

Tyler Orsburn
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Public Eye Soar Projection and Light Festival returns Nov. 7-8 for its 12th annual showcase at Gulf Coast State College.

The two-night event is free and promises a colorful celebration of creativity and music.

According to a news release, this year's event will showcase more than 200 artists.

Festival favorites

- Sand Art
- Living Statues
- Passport Through Time
- Shadow Dome
- JD's Fun House

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