

Florida DOGE starts hunt for waste

Will DeSantis' effort cut back local government or simply create political talking points?

By Anthony Man
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Florida DOGE has commenced, delivering hope and glee to some, anxiety and fear to others.

Day One started small: Nine people dispatched by Gov. Ron DeSantis and Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia arrived at the Broward County Governmental Center in Fort Lauderdale on Thursday, where a county government aide said they were ensconced in an "undisclosed location." A DOGE team heads for Orange County on Tuesday.

Little is known about precisely what the teams are up to. There have been broad declarations from DeSantis and Ingoglia about the effort, but just how they're going about their business, and the ultimate expectations, are among many unanswered questions.

Will the Florida DOGE probe of cities and counties selected by the governor or his aides, and overseen by his office, model itself after its federal namesake — which saw Department of Government Efficiency teams overseen by billionaire Elon Musk rampage through agencies eliminating employees, vacuuming up citizens' personal data, and gutting government programs?

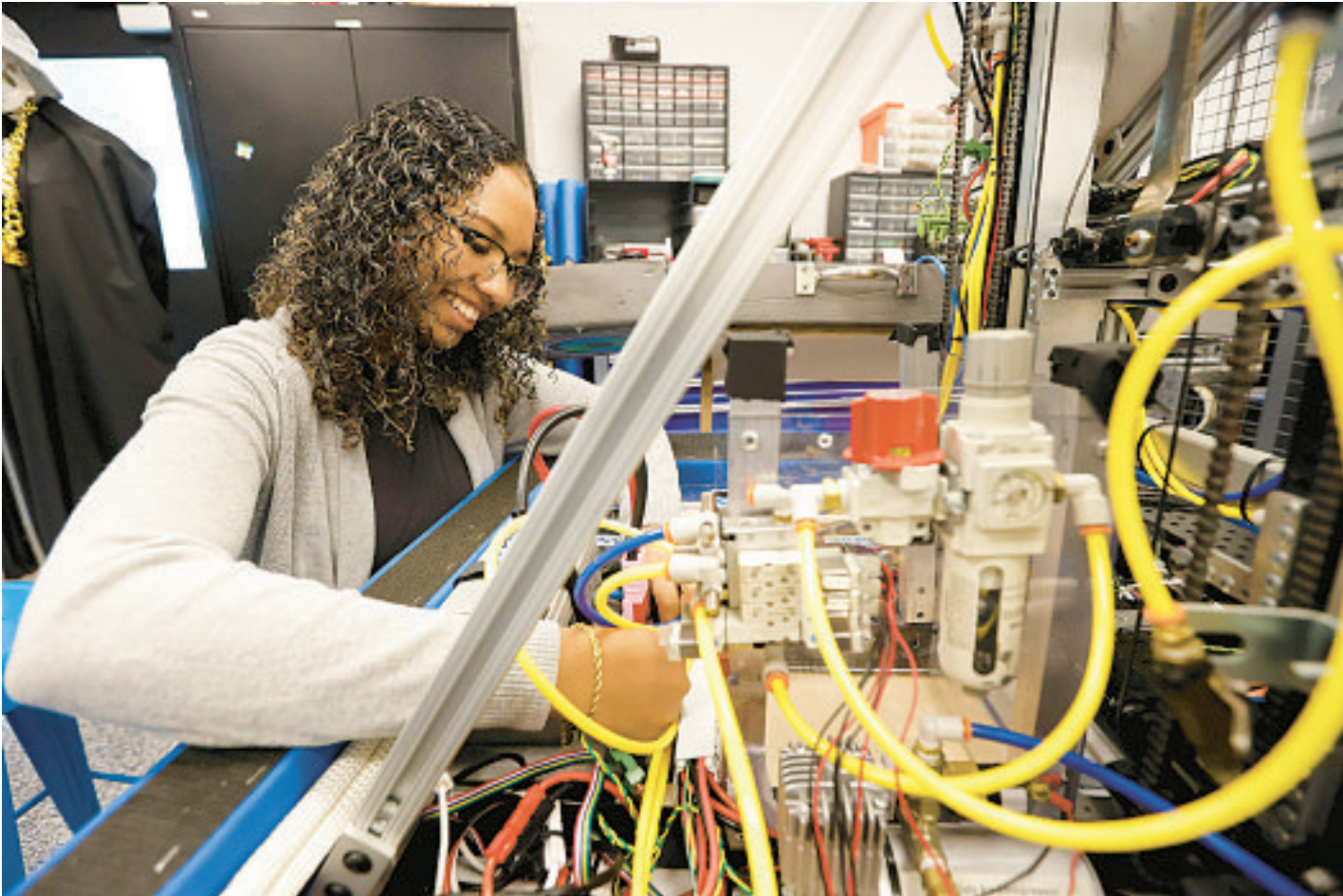
Or will it produce political talking points proving, or at least purporting to show, wasteful or improper spending — and become propaganda for DeSantis to sell his final big attempt to remake the state before he leaves office: eliminating property taxes?

"Nobody knows," said Steve Geller, a Broward County commissioner who spent two decades in the Florida Legislature, including a term as Senate Democratic leader.

State Rep. Chip LaMarca, a Broward Republican and former county commissioner and Lighthouse Point city commis-

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"Without the mentorship I got here, without the materials I got from here, none of this would have happened. I wouldn't have even known I had it in me to do it." — Orlando teen Elise Rina



Elise Rina, 19, the Central Florida Boys & Girls Club volunteer of the year in 2024, works in the robotics lab on July 21 at the club in Orlando. She is now a student at Spelman College in Atlanta. **STEPHEN M. DOWELL/ORLANDO SENTINEL**

Threat to local program highlights its big impact

Boys & Girls Club issued public plea before frozen federal funds were restored

By Michael Cuglietta
Orlando Sentinel

Elise Rina has been fascinated with building things since she was a little girl, delighting in the make-a-robot-from-a-soda-can kit she got for Christmas one year and joining the Lego robotics club at her elementary school.

Rina's mother, a high school art teacher, splurged to send her daughter to a week of robotics camp one summer, but beyond that their middle-class family wasn't sure how to pay for or expand their daughter's mechanical interests.

Then the family learned that the Walt Disney Boys & Girls Club in Pine Hills had a robotics team, one supported by Disney Imagineering, the creative division behind the company's attractions, and free to students who are club members.

"I was like: I need to come here, and I need to be part of this team," said Rina, now a 19-year-old college student.

Her time with Rockstar Robotics let her build robots, compete on a robotics team and snag several awards. The Edgewater High School graduate is now studying math and industrial engineering at Spelman College in Atlanta. She credits it all, including a Spelman scholarship, to the Boys & Girls Club.

On June 30, the Trump administration announced it was freezing over \$6 billion in funding for after-school and summer programs, adult literacy and English lessons, among others, a move that alarmed public schools and nonprofits like Boys & Girls Clubs.

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Shelter plan was shot down, so he wrote a play

'Unhoused/homefree' will debut at Breakthrough fest

By Matthew J. Palm
Orlando Sentinel

A few months ago, Alan Levi went to a public meeting about a proposed homeless shelter in his SoDo neighborhood — the area south of downtown Orlando.

He left angry — with the comments he heard, the actions he saw and the injustices he felt. Even worse, he left disappointed — with himself.

"The saddest part was I did not speak up at the meeting," he said. "I deeply regretted that."

So he decided to write a play. It will debut this week at the Breakthrough

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Developer moves ahead with plan for Wekiva Study Area apartments

Attorney: It's grandfathered in under old version of law

By Martin E. Comas
Orlando Sentinel

A developer's controversial plan to build hundreds of apartments in the environmentally-sensitive Wekiva Study Area has reached an impasse with Seminole County officials, who say the project is not allowed under new restrictions written into a state affordable housing law.

A recent county meeting with planning officials, developers and lawyers quickly took a heated turn when an attorney for the developer angrily threatened to sue Seminole if it doesn't approve the project under the 2023 Live Local Act.

"We will also be seeking our attorneys'

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