

## Bryan's Brief September 2009

The leaves are changing color, some are already falling and if you're not yet raking leaves - it's just around the corner. Cooler weather has been a long time coming. We have a lot to cover in this issue!

**The FY2010 Budget** - The budget hearings are over and we had only two speakers at each of the public hearings. For the new fiscal year, the County reduced property taxes by \$8.8 million. That makes about a \$40 million cut since I took office - about a million a month. I'm proud of our Commission and our County Administration's response to this critical economy, but it's not over. In addition to the property tax reductions, we're expecting a reduction of \$2.6 million in state-shared sales tax collections - with a combined total of over \$11 million in reduced revenues for the new fiscal year. We also expect less revenue from a loss of fees due to the slowing of building activity and a decline in the County's level of reserves. Overall, the total budget is decreasing \$20.2 million or 7.6%. Even with these expected revenue reductions, we held the line on property taxes - with no increases.

To address the overall reduction in revenue, the County imposed a number of budget changes:

- 61 positions eliminated over the past two years; more than 5% of the Board's total workforce
- No raises for County employees
- Over the past two years, cost savings of over 50% (\$1 million) through a competitive process to purchase property/general liability insurance
- Created a public/private partnership to dispose of recyclable materials saving \$284,500 annually
- Over the past two years, instituted a hiring and travel freeze
- Reduced hours of operation at the branch libraries for an annual cost savings of \$386,985
- Reduced take home vehicles from 49 to 1 (a 24-7, on-call Public Works supervisor)

**Consolidation of Fire and Emergency Services** - In addition to the reductions noted above and the use of reserves, the County considered a number of options to address the decline in revenues - one of those a Fire Services Fee. The additional revenues from the Fire Services Fee will fund the consolidation of the City Fire Department and the County Emergency Medical Services Department and will provide a higher level of service for the unincorporated area of Leon County. Specifically, there will be an increase of one Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technician at each of the five rural stations, a 50% increase in first-response personnel from 2 to 3 for a total of 18 new positions county-wide. I hope that none of us will need Fire/EM Services; but, if we do, we've implemented a highly coordinated, first-response system to quickly and efficiently handle these critical services in your most crucial time of need. Although the consolidation of these two departments and the resulting fee have been addressed in the media since February and I've discussed it with many of you, I wanted to give you more detail on it's implementation. I know it's never a good time for a fee assessment, but with the declining property tax assessments expected due to declining property values, hopefully, the fee will be offset by those savings. You'll see a lot of information coming in the next few weeks about the consolidation of Fire and EM Services and you can find more details at either [www.leoncountyfl.gov](http://www.leoncountyfl.gov) or [www.talgov.com](http://www.talgov.com). or you may call (850) 891-2799.

I wanted to share with you too what I consider to be our report card! An annual survey is conducted of all Florida counties and I continue to be impressed with the County's administration of your services and take great pride in how we measure up against the other counties:

- Our budget of \$842 per capita is the 5th lowest budget per capita out of all 67 counties in Florida with a range of \$590 to \$4,791.
- Our staffing of 6.6 employees per 1000 residents is the 6th lowest number of employees for all 67 counties with a range of 4.4 to 22.6 per 1,000 residents.

**Killearn Lakes Recreation Issues** - I've received some calls from the Association and some Killearn Lakes residents regarding the Pop Warner practices and games being held in the neighborhood public parks. This was approved by your Board as initially only 100 kids were expected to sign up and they had more than 300 - many from your own neighborhood. For those who live near the fields, I know this is a problem with all the noise, traffic and lights. For other residents, I've heard how grateful you are to have a place for your children to play ball without having to drive across the county to playing fields. Just want you to know that I've met with Jackie Pons, our School Superintendent, regarding the use of school ball fields and his property managers are meeting with our Public Works Department Management. We're trying to move this process along quickly to address the needs of the kids and the concerns of residents. The Pop Warner Managers are also pursuing other options for a more permanent location. I'll keep you posted. If your children are participating - just a reminder to help the Pop Warner staff keep the area free of litter and debris and monitor the children please - it will take all of you with that many - to insure they're not trespassing on the properties of those who live in the area. I know the neighbors will greatly appreciate your assistance.

**Intersection/Roadway Improvements** - Meridian Rd/Oxbottom and Meridian Rd/Bannerman Rd - work has begun at the Bannerman Rd intersection and, with no delays, it should be completed by Nov. 1 or before. Work will begin within the next two weeks on at the Meridian Rd/Oxbottom intersection and should be completed in about 60 days. If you have problems or concerns call Betsy Thorpe at 606-1500.

Timberlane Intersection Improvements and sidewalk installation from Timberlane School Rd to Woodley Dr - Sidewalk extension and intersection improvement should be completed by mid October.

As always, thank you for your continuing support. I'm looking forward to the various neighborhood's Fall festivals and would welcome invitations to other neighborhood festivals or meetings to discuss issues of concern. I'm honored to serve as your District IV Commissioner. I welcome your suggestions on how we can improve and hope you'll call on me if you have any questions or concerns – [deslogeb@leoncountyfl.gov](mailto:deslogeb@leoncountyfl.gov) or 606-5364.

Respectfully,



*Bryan Desloge*

Chairman

Leon County Commissioner, District IV

