

My Perspective – June 2009

Greetings District Two Residents,

**The FY2010 Budget has been finalized. What a relief! A tremendous load has been lifted from our shoulders, but not without a lot of pain. First, we must lay-off 14-15 employees (non-public safety). This will affect public government services from our Public Works Department (roads, road projects) as well as other services we provide. This coupled with all remaining employees taking 15 unpaid leave/furlough days per year will impact our daily functions in a pronounced way. Our residents will notice a difference.

**The Sheriff's Office will see fewer resources due to the fact it is being funded at the FY2009 budget disbursements, all at a time when crime stats continue to increase. Just last week the CITGO Convenience Store was robbed at gun point; the B.P. Gas Station was also robbed, and an on-line predator who tried to seduce an underage teenager was apprehended.

**There was an anonymous robo-call two weeks ago regarding a vote the Board of Commissioners was considering regarding a range of steps to balance the FY2010 budget. This call incited citizens' anger, but it did not deal with the facts, nor did it offer any solutions. This call was followed by a small public rally on the Square in downtown Covington.

**The Chairman of the local Republican Party and one of our local Republican Senators spoke about wasteful spending and "pork" in our budget; however, as usual, they offered no direct evidence of "pork" or offered any solutions. They did not give any suggestions whatsoever as to how we could balance the budget without painful cuts, and they did not attend any budget work sessions or public hearings regarding the 2010 budget.

**Newton County is about 67% private property and 33% business property on the tax digest. This is an imbalance that has to be addressed.

**When we vigorously oppose any retail taxes, be it large or small (i.e. large retailer) that may want to come to our community we have to realize that it may affect how we can pay for the expanding services that government has to offer. By law we have to pick-up dead animals (health issue), inspect construction projects (safety hazard), inspect restaurants (safety/health issue), be custodian of the public records, collect taxes, hold elections, provide police, fire, and emergency services to our citizens. This requires on-going training, upgrading and rapid response. We must understand the ramifications if we fail to deliver.

District Update:

1. The Georgia Department of Transportation has agreed to re-time and align all traffic motor signals from I-20, Salem Road Intersection to Smith Store Road. This will allow motorist traveling south of Salem Road to Smith Store Road a smoother driving experience because the traffic lights will be evenly timed.

2. The Denny Dobbs Park will come back to the Board of Commissioners for another phase to be approved. Last week the commission approved Sunbelt Builders Construction Company of Covington to be the Project Manager for the six-month operation and construction of the park.

Have a happy and safe summer,

Commissioner Simmons