



AGENDA
FERNANDINA BEACH CITY COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 5, 2024
8:45 AM
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS
204 ASH STREET
FERNANDINA BEACH, FL 32034

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **ROLL CALL**
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
4. **RECESS THE SPECIAL MEETING**

- 4.1 **CITY MANAGER FINALIST - ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS** - *City Commissioners will conduct individual one-on-one interviews with each City Manager finalist: Sonia Alves-Viveiros, Sarah Campbell, Tandra Davis, Michael Mahaney, and William "Lee" Smith.*

Time	Antun	Ayscue	Bean	Ross	Sturges
8:45 a.m.	Coffee, tea, danish, and fruit				
9:00 to 9:40 a.m.	Alves-Viveiros	Campbell	Davis	Mahaney	Smith
9:40 to 10:20 a.m.	Smith	Alves-Viveiros	Campbell	Davis	Mahaney
10:20 to 11:00 a.m.	Mahaney	Smith	Alves-Viveiros	Campbell	Davis
11:00 to 11:10 a.m.	Break				
11:10 to 11:50 a.m.	Davis	Mahaney	Smith	Alves-Viveiros	Campbell
11:50 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Campbell	Davis	Mahaney	Smith	Alves-Viveiros

5. **REOPEN THE SPECIAL MEETING**

- 5.1 **REOPEN THE SPECIAL MEETING - 1:00 PM** - *Upon the conclusion of the individual one-on-one City Commissioner / City Manager finalist interviews, the public may be present.*

6. **CITY MANAGER FINALIST PANEL INTERVIEWS**

- 6.1 **CITY MANAGER FINALIST INTERVIEWS** - *The City Commission will interview City Manager finalists in City Hall chambers.*

Time	Name
1:00 to 1:05 p.m.	Review procedures for interviews
1:05 to 1:35 p.m.	Alves-Viveiros

1:35 to 2:05 p.m.	Davis
2:05 to 2:35 p.m.	Mahaney
2:35 to 2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45 to 3:15 p.m.	Smith
3:15 to 3:45 p.m.	Campbell

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 **CITY MANAGER FINALIST SELECTION** - *The City Commission selects a finalist and directs staff to negotiate an employment agreement for consideration at their September 17, City Commission Regular Meeting.*

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

9. ADJOURNMENT

ANY PERSON WISHING TO APPEAL ANY DECISION MADE BY THE COMMISSION WITH RESPECT TO ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT SUCH MEETING OR HEARING WILL NEED A RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS, AND, FOR SUCH PURPOSES, MAY NEED TO ENSURE THAT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS IS MADE, WHICH RECORD INCLUDES THE TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE UPON WHICH THE APPEAL IS MADE. AT THE DISCRETION OF THE MAYOR, A RECESS MAY BE SCHEDULED EVERY NINETY MINUTES.

Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations in order to participate should contact the City Clerk at (904) 310-3115 or TTY/TDD 711 (for the hearing or speech impaired).

CITY COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM
City of Fernandina Beach



SUBJECT: City Manager Finalist - One-on-One Interviews

ITEM TYPE: Discussion

REQUESTED ACTION: Consider City Manager finalists.

SYNOPSIS: City Commissioners will conduct individual one-on-one interviews with City Manager finalists: Sonia Alves-Viveiros, Sarah Campbell, Tandra Davis, Michael Mahaney, and William "Lee" Smith.

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8:45 a.m.	Coffee, tea, danish and fruit				
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9:40 to 10:20 a.m.	Smith	Alves-Viveiros	Campbell	Davis	Mahaney
10:20 to 11:00 a.m.	Mahaney	Smith	Alves-Viveiros	Campbell	Davis
11:00 to 11:10 a.m.	Break				
11:10 to 11:50 a.m.	Davis	Mahaney	Smith	Alves-Viveiros	Campbell
11:50 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Campbell	Davis	Mahaney	Smith	Alves-Viveiros

NOTE: THE PUBLIC IS EXCLUDED FROM THE CITY COMMISSIONER / CITY MANAGER FINALIST ONE ON ONE INTERVIEWS BUT WELCOMED UPON THE REOPENING OF THE SPECIAL MEETING AT APPROXIMATELY 1:00PM.

FISCAL IMPACT:

CITY ATTORNEY COMMENTS: N/A

CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION(S): At the pleasure of the City Commission.

Denise Matson, Human Resources Director 8/16/2024
Kim Briley, Deputy City Clerk 8/19/2024
Jeremiah Glisson, Interim City Manager 8/19/2024

Caroline Best

Date: July 30, 2024

Submitted By: Caroline Best, City Clerk

COMMISSION ACTION:



Section 4

Sonia A. Alves-Viveiros

*Fernandina Beach City Manager
Candidate Report*

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Cover Letter and Resume

Sonia Alves-Viveiros, MPA, QPA
197 W Springtown Road
Long Valley, NJ 07853
alves.sonia62@gmail.com – (908) 956-3792

City of Fernandina Florida

RE: City Manager Position

Dear Sir/Madam:

I'm writing to express my interest in the City Manager position. My experience as a public servant has enabled me to provide both elected officials and residents with the highest level of customer service. I have extensive experience in human resources, labor negotiations, financial management, budget development and implementation. Additionally, my concentration as the executive officer of a municipality has been to examine and reorganize departments so as to effectively and efficiently lessen the burden to taxpayers while providing exceptional services.

My experience in government and current duties are crafted in a collaborative manner and at the direction of the governing body. I have direct communication with all of the governing body members to discuss key items in their respective subcommittees, such as the municipal budget, succession planning and shared services. I believe these three areas are vital to an organization to have a sound budget and to be a prime example of a forward-thinking community. These items, as I am currently experiencing in the pandemic, are telling for the municipality's overall financial health.

A goal of mine is to engage the community with honesty, integrity and dedication. Dealing with diverse communities is something I have deep connections with. Without that group of diverse members, our communities would not be what they are. Keeping that in mind, is how I measure my success as the executive officer in a municipality.

Sincerely,

Sonia Alves-Viveiros



Sonia Alves-Viveiros, MPA
City Manager/Administrator

Personal Information:

908.956.3792
alves.sonia62@gmail.com

EDUCATION:

Seton Hall University
Master of Public
Administration 2010
Seton Hall University
Bachelor of Arts - Political
Science 2008
Rutgers University
Certified Qualified
Government Procurement
Agent (QPA)

SKILLS:

Language(s):

Spanish & Portuguese - Fluent
Reading & Writing

BOARDS/ASSOCIATIONS:

- NJ Municipal Managers Association - Board Treasurer and Executive Member
- International City Managers Association - Member

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Integration of Two Career Fire Services Departments
- Reorganization and Restructuring Departments
- Project Manage \$120m Infrastructure & Capital Improvement Projects

SUMMARY

More than ten years of local government experience with expertise in management operations, strategic planning, labor relations, organizational restructuring and analysis, financial operations and budgeting, project management, customer service and media relations.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

CITY MANAGER/BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR *(Actual Title)* **2022-Present**

Township of Edison, Edison, NJ / Apr 2022 - Present

The Township of Edison, NJ is located in central NJ with a population of approximately 107,000 residents and is the sixth largest municipality in the state. There are approximately 1,000 employees throughout the municipality. As the Chief Operating Officer, I am responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Township along with planning and creating a budget. I currently manage and oversee all of the Township's services by setting programs and organizational goals and objectives, establishing organizational structure and determining the need for and developing plans for organizational changes; negotiating with ten bargaining unit contracts. Additional duties include the following:

- Recommending and setting policies for the organization; Implementation of performance evaluation reviews
- Develop and implement all procedural guidelines
- Work with elected officials to provide assistance with their constituent needs in their districts
- Oversight responsibility for the following functions: police, roads, stormwater drainage, water and sewer utility, parks, recreation, planning, zoning, finance, general services and personnel.

CITY MANAGER

2020-2022

City of Englewood, Englewood, NJ / Nov 2020 - April 2022

The City of Englewood is located in northern NJ and is considered a suburb of New York City. It is the home to many NYC commuters with a population of 30,000 residents. There are approximately 400 employees in the municipality. I served as the Chief Executive Officer responsible for day-to-day operations and creating municipal budget; Managed and oversaw City services by setting programs and organizational goals and objectives, establishing organizational structure and determining the need for and developing plans for organizational changes; negotiated eight bargaining unit contracts and prepared the municipal budget.

- Created and implemented policies for the organization
- Developed and implemented all procedural guideline

Alves-Viveiros, Sonia

CITY MANAGER

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR & ASSISTANT BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR *(Actual Title)*

2016-2020

Township of Maplewood, Maplewood, NJ / Jun 2018 - Nov 2020 / Asst BA Sep 2016 - May 2018

The Township of Maplewood is located in the northwestern part of NJ with a population size of approximately 27,000 residents. It is considered a suburb of NYC with a direct train line to NYC Penn Station. There are approximately 300 employees in the Township. I served as the Chief Executive Officer responsible for implementing Township policies along with planning and creating a budget; managed and oversaw all of the Township's services by setting programs and organizational goals and objectives, establishing organizational structure and determining the need for and developing plans for organizational changes; negotiate eight bargaining unit contracts. As the Assistant Business Administrator, I was responsible for planning and creation of the Township budget, acting as a department head and performing all necessary duties in absence of the administrator.

- Prepared the Township's municipal budget
- Setting policies for the organization
- Developed and implemented all procedural guidelines
- Performed duties and acted as the Township's Qualified Purchasing Agent; oversight on all procurement procedures for the government entity
- Compiles and prepares the Township budget
- Performed all human resources duties which include FMLA processing, grievances,
- performance evaluations, union negotiations and attendance tracking
- Attended all Township Committee meetings including closed session and budget hearings
- Managed IT services for the Township, operated and oversaw the Township's website
- Performed purchasing duties which include creation of bid specifications, review bid packages and make recommendations to the Township Committee to award contracts
- Other roles in the Township are as follows: - Commissioner & Executive Member of the New Jersey Intergovernmental Insurance Fund; serving as an executive member and liaison to the Risk Management Committee; review and research liability factors, make risk assessments, and recommendations to members for overall safety guidance.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

PROFESSOR/INSTRUCTOR

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ/ Apr 2023 - Present

Provide government procurement instruction to students

- Develop and deliver engaging lectures and tutorials, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills among students.
- Assist students with course material, provided feedback on assignments, and held regular office hours.
- Collaborate with colleagues to create innovative teaching materials and assessments.

DEPUTY CITY CLERK

City of Summit, Summit, NJ / Aug 2015 - Sep 2016 Manager responsible for developing the annual budget for the City Clerk's department. Lead administrator supervising staff training and supporting departmental actions.

- Administer financial reports for budget preparation; Summit's current budget is about 55 million and has been reduced by 11.25 percent from 2015. By researching and developing more efficient ways to use technology in which the budget has significantly been affected by those improvements.
- Prepared ordinances, resolutions and proclamations for execution, recording, archival and distribution.
- Performed administrative tasks, such as answering telephone calls, filing court
- documents and maintaining office supplies and equipment.
- Issued public notification of official activities or meetings.
- Recorded and edited minutes of meetings and distributed to appropriate officials or staff members.

Section 4

Alves-Viveiros, Sonia

ASSISTANT TO THE TOWNSHIP CLERK/HR ASSISTANT

Bernards Township, Basking Ridge, NJ / Feb 2012 - Sep 2015

- Maintained personnel files; monitor record retention
- Provided technical support to the QPA, compiled bid packages, contracts and resolutions for vendors; created purchasing orders for the entire Administration department
- Monitored tort claims involving the Township
- Assisted the Township Clerk with municipal duties such as, prepared resolutions, ordinances, agendas and minutes, Informed and provided citizens with current Township information including having knowledge on ordinances and resolutions that affect their daily lives. In addition, I organized materials and make all necessary arrangements during elections
- Provided assistance to Human Resources department with data entry and filing as well as developed and redo FMLA excel spreadsheets for Human Resources, compiled FMLA paperwork for employees; maintained confidentiality with employee and Township related issues, assisted employees during injuries and monitored and maintain up-to-date Federal and State labor postings on all employee bulletin Boards and processed Workers' Compensation claims for Human Resources

Candidate Introduction

SONIA ALVES-VIVEIROS

EDUCATION

- Masters in Public Administration with a concentration in Public Policy
- Bachelor Degree in Political Science and Minor in Applied Music
- Certified Qualified Procurement Agent

EXPERIENCE

Business Administrator, Township of Edison	2022 - Present
Instructor, Rutgers University	2023 - Present
City Manager, City of Englewood	2020 - 2022
Business Administrator/Asst. BA, Township of Maplewood	2016 - 2020
Deputy City Clerk, City of Summit	2015 - 2016
Asst. to the Municipal Clerk, Bernards Township	2012 - 2016

BACKGROUND

Edison Township is the 6th largest municipality in the State of New Jersey with a population of 107,000 residents. There are approximately 1,000 employees throughout the municipality. Edison As the Chief Operating Officer, I am responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Township along with planning and creating a budget. The Township operates under two separate budgets. The municipal budget is approximately \$176 million dollars with a Solid Waste budget of approximately \$11 million dollars. The Township currently maintains a surplus of \$12.5 million dollars.

I currently manage and oversee all of the Township's services by setting programs and organizational goals and objectives, establishing organizational structure and determining the need for and developing plans for organizational changes; negotiating with ten bargaining unit contracts. I directly supervise 25 employees under the Administration department which oversees Information Technology, Human Resources, Procurement, Edison TV and general administration for the municipality.

The three most significant issues facing the Township are:

- One of the most important issues the Township faces is poor water and sewer infrastructure. There is a mandated Department of Environmental Consent Order the Township is under which requires a full rehabilitation of all of the municipalities water and sewer infrastructure. As a result of the Township operating its own utility, it has become a \$100 million dollars worth of capital investments.

SONIA ALVES-VIVEIROS

- The second issue is redevelopment. The Township is unique in its size and demographics. It has been struggling to create a cohesive identity given issues such as having a multitude of warehouses and being surrounded by three major State highways.
- The third issue is outdated and unsafe parks and recreation facilities. The Township in the last couple of years has begun making improvements to approximately 36 parks. This has become a major topic regarding quality of life issues as well as committing to large capital investments in the parks.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

My management and leadership style would be described as communicative and collaborative. I do not believe it is efficient to micromanage staff but rather have a participatory type of environment where department heads and subordinates feel valued by the Township. This is done through management and individual department meetings. Having regular weekly interdepartmental meetings and biweekly department head meetings allows for a constant flow of communication. This avoids a majority of potential misunderstandings.

Employees and elected officials would say that I am open and efficient. I like to have a balance of new and participative ideas while having employees understand the value of structure when it comes to doing your work. My relationship with everyone including the elected official and tax payer is professional. I understand that as an employee of the government entity that I am here to serve those two people. In addition, I entrust my department heads to run their departments independently. However, I make them aware that I am here to support them in any means possible. My best management skill is listening to all of those around me and allowing them to speak as to their ideas and concerns. My weakest management skill would be that while decisions have to be made, I should understand that pleasing isn't going to get the job done. I have made many strides to overcome this personal challenge.

Employment accountability and engagement is vital to the organization. I have created a performance evaluation form that covers a range of areas that help both the manager and employee identify goals. Without this process, it would be difficult during situations where termination is a necessary action. This is perhaps one of the hardest tasks as the decision to terminate is not a lightly decision and must be well-thought out.

The balance of being both the Chief Executive Officer and working closely with the Mayor and Council is perhaps the most challenging of all as a Business Administrator. While it is your duty to serve the Mayor and the Council, it is also your duty to maintain a good working environment for employees. Both go hand-in-hand when it comes to being able to supply the public with the best customer service and having employees feel like their hard work is always appreciated. While I feel these are challenging, I also feel that the reward comes out as being a

SONIA ALVES-VIVEIROS

well-rounded Business Administrator who can administer his or her best knowledge of the laws of the municipality as well as labor laws.

The challenges I see facing the City of Fernandina Beach:

- Economic Development and reviewing potential or further growth. Aside from being known as a tourist City, a year-round approach to making it a viable and growing City is a potential challenge.
- Resident involvement in their local government by providing volunteer opportunities. In addition, creating an internship program for high school students to understand and get involved in their local government.
- Collaborating with new stakeholders who can contribute to the growth of the City.

During the first six months my efforts will involve:

- Review and meet with finance staff to understand the City's viability and growth;
- Meet with local stakeholders, employees, elected officials and any other key community leaders. This would also be combined with holding a public forum to "meet and greet" the new City Manager.
- Review pertinent policies and procedures, manuals, etc..
- Review the City's social media coverage and develop a more civically engaged platform.

I work daily with the Township's very own TV station. This has allowed positive and important content to be transmitted to the public about important Township events and meetings. Holding public meetings is an essential part of my job and I hold myself accountable and responsible to be respectful to anyone who may have a negative response to actions taken by their local government. Therefore, I know that I would not have any issue with a future employer reviewing any media coverage that involved me. I also communicate regularly with media outlets to provide accurate information.

During my leisure time, I enjoy the performing arts, outdoor family activities and traveling.

SIX ADJECTIVES OR PHRASES I WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE MYSELF

- Dependable
- Accessible
- Effective
- Understanding
- Communicative
- Responsible

SONIA ALVES-VIVEIROS

REASON FOR DEPARTING CURRENT POSITION

The City and State of Florida are under a renaissance. I find this an opportunity to improve the quality of life of the residents with my extensive knowledge and experience in diverse communities.

CURRENT / MOST RECENT SALARY

My final compensation at Edison Township was \$230,000, including vehicle allowance and attending conferences for professional development.

Section 4

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
SONIA ANDREIA ALVES-VIVEIROS**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search No Records Found

County

Morris County, NJ	No Records Found
Middlesex County, NJ	No Records Found
Bergen County, NJ	No Records Found
Essex County, NJ	No Records Found
Union County, NJ	No Records Found
Somerset County, NJ	No Records Found

State

New Jersey	No Records Found
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Civil Records Checks:**County**

Morris County, NJ	No Records Found
Middlesex County, NJ	No Records Found
Bergen County, NJ	August 2021 – Civil Lawsuit filed by Pulice against the Maplewood Township including Ms. Alves-Viveiros in her capacity as City Manager. Disposition: Open

November 2021 – Civil Lawsuit filed by Lester against the Maplewood Township including Ms. Alves-Viveiros in her capacity as City Manager.
Disposition: Open

Essex County, NJ	November 2021 – Civil Lawsuit filed by Bell against the Maplewood Township including Ms. Alves-Viveiros in her capacity as City Manager. Disposition: Open
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Union County, NJ	January 2017 – Civil lawsuit filed Against Ms. Alves-Viveiros Disposition: January 2017, closed
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**See Page 16 for Candidate Explanation For Records Found*

**Background Check Summary for
SONIA ANDREIA ALVES-VIVEIROS**

	July 2015 – Civil lawsuit filed Against Ms. Alves-Viveiros Disposition: August 2015 , default by ‘ Clerk
Somerset County, NJ	No Records Found
Federal New Jersey	March 2020 – Civil Lawsuit filed by Bell against the Maplewood Township including Ms. Alves-Viveiros in her capacity as City Manager. Disposition: July 2021 , Terminated
	May 2019 – Civil Lawsuit filed by Bell against the Maplewood Township including Ms. Alves-Viveiros in her capacity as City Manager. Disposition: February 2022 , Terminated
	<i>*See Page 16 for Candidate Explanation For Records Found</i>
Motor Vehicle New Jersey	No Records Found
Credit	Good
Personal Bankruptcy	No Records Found
Sex Offender Registry	Not Listed
Education	Confirmed
Employment	Confirmed
Social Media	Nothing of Concern Found

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
SONIA ANDREIA ALVES-VIVEIROS**

To: Lynelle Klein <lynelle@cb-asso.com>

Subject: Re: Background Check Records that Require an Explanation

The ones in Essex and Bergen Counties are named parties to cases related to the City of Englewood and Township of Maplewood which names me automatically as a defendant when an employee sues the municipality. They are public records which can be found at the following site: njcourts.gov

The one in Essex County Bell vs. Maplewood, et als is for alleged wrongful termination/discrimination. The termination was of course substantiated for conduct unbecoming and several other performance issues.

One of the Bergen County cases is for alleged ageism/discrimination for not promoting someone to a captain's position. The employee was suspended for 20 days for major infractions therefore was not promoted.

The second Bergen County case is for alleged discrimination/harassment, there was no action taken by me for this employee rather this employee alleges that the City harassed him during his 2 year leave for allegedly having Covid and then told to come back to work when the City doctor said he was able to.

The others in NJ are related to a sale of a house where a buyer broke contract.

Should you have any other questions, please contact me. I apologize for any delays as I am currently out of the country and returning August 10.

**Background Check Summary for
SONIA ANDREIA ALVES-VIVEIROS
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: _____

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No ☒
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes No ☒
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes No ☒
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No ☒
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No ☒
6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated, driving under the influence, operating a vehicle impaired, or a similar offense?
Yes No ☒
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No ☒
8. Please list all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one.
Facebook, LinkedIn
9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No ☒
10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.
see attached.

Attested to:

Sonia Alves-Viveiros
Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via PDF DOCUMENT to Lynelle@cb-asso.com or via fax to (561) 621-5965 **no later than 5:00 PM MST 07/29/2024.**

(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

**Background Check Summary for
SONIA ANDREIA ALVES-VIVEIROS
Personal Disclosure Explanation**

Sonia Alves-Viveiros, Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Lawsuits involved and represented by municipalities I have worked in as follows:

Lester Martin vs. City of Englewood, et. Als.

Fred Public vs. City of Englewood, et. Als.

Calvin Bell vs. Township of Maplewood, et. Als.

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes
Sonia Alves-Viveiros

Robert Diehl – Council President / Councilman, Township of Edison , NJ 732-841-9000

Mr. Diehl has known Ms. Alves-Viveiros since 2022 when she was hired as the Business Administrator in the City. He was on the interviewing panel, and she was the top candidate by a large margin.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is effective at business administration. She deals with labor negotiations as well as all major contracts. She is involved with union issues and solves problems in a decent and fair way. Her ability to be equitable in negotiations is an asset to the city's administration.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros uses her knowledge well for the City's yearly budget of \$175.9 billion. She has strong financial skills, always double-checking the numbers. She is prepared and works hard, showing up at meetings and presentations with all reports in place. Mr. Diehl notes that she is the best Business Administrator the township has had in his time of service, which spans over twenty years.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is heavily involved with the hiring process. She interviews everyone applying, and narrows down the field. Mr. Diehl works with her through this process, and is impressed with her approach. Based off their combined recommendations, the Mayor completes the final hiring signature.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros deals well with the stress of deadlines. She is present for every Business Administration meeting. Due to her thorough preparation, she can handle any questions or stressful situations. In addition, she is comfortable with ongoing communication to sort through issues. In the City, the six elected officials and hired officers work closely together. They meet every day throughout the day, and there is ongoing communication.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is pleasurable to work with. She has a nice disposition, good manners, and approaches others well. She gets along with others, and completes her job. The mayor has been extremely progressive, and she is part of a progressive team within the City. They have accomplished more in two years than in the previous ten. She adds a practical perspective on their forward measures, finding out how things will work. Her solid assessment of desired changes has helped implementation.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros attends city meetings, and is skilled good at handling the public. The City is known for being difficult to work in and manage as it is bordered by seven other towns, and has a town in the middle of their town. There are many pressing needs. In addition, it has a diverse population and is known as New Jersey tough. At council meetings, Ms. Alves-Viveiros must address questions without exacerbating it. It would be easy to escalate, and she never does. Her calm responses with these difficult interchanges increase trust between citizens and city staff.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is dependable. She shows up and puts in a good day's work. She focuses on the job at hand, and completes it. She is appreciated and respected. Her work ethic and

Reference Notes

Sonia Alves-Viveiros

commitment is unmatched. Mr. Diehl has worked over twenty years in local government, and she is one of the best.

There is nothing controversial in Ms. Alves-Viveiros' history. She will continue to do well in local government management. Her experience and knowledge make her a qualified candidate for a city manager position in other locations as well.

Words or phrases used to describe Sonia Alves-Viveiros:

- Conscientious,
- Dependable,
- Hard-working,
- Detail-oriented,
- Good communicator, and
- Pleasant.

Strengths: A committed administrator, willing to communicate and collaborate with elected officials and department heads.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Frank Panucci – Business Administrator, Point Pleasant Borough and Bay Head Township, NJ 732-232-5111

Mr. Panucci has known Ms. Alves-Viveiros since 2019. They both serve on the Executive Board of the New Jersey Municipal Management Association (NJMMA).

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is skilled at networking within the board and with state leaders. She helps to craft policy, and represents the group well. She takes action, picking up the phone to get to the person she needs. She is not afraid to call around and ask questions to help policies move forward. She is known as an innovator within the board and the state.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is involved in training for NJMMA. She readily shares experiences with less-experienced municipal managers. She is an asset to the association and shares experiences with younger municipal managers.

New Jersey has some of the most stringent purchasing laws – so to survive there, one must understand financial guidelines. There is an immense amount of red tape to go through, and Ms. Alves-Viveiros keeps up with it. She accomplishes tasks well before the deadline. She sets the tone for others to be diligent with assignments, and is known for her dependability.

New Jersey is tough. The town Ms. Alves-Viveiros currently works in is known for being extremely tough. There is not an easy road: dealing with the public, with elected officials, with

Reference Notes

Sonia Alves-Viveiros

the laws. Ms. Alves-Viveiros is a leader in the city, and known throughout the state. She knows how to read people and how to respond to the issue at hand without escalation. She carries an air of authority that contributes to positive interactions with individuals and groups.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros deals with stressful situations without becoming stressed herself. Within the board, she shares experiences and advice that helps others. She takes care of herself so that she approaches situations with a clear head and calm response. Individuals want to talk and work with her. They respect her and are drawn to her because of her experience and ability to positively impact her environment.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is involved with the association. She attends the meetings and helps others. When Mr. Panucci was dealing with staff being absent, he called her for advice. Over the next few months, she continued to check on him and offer support. She was not paid for it; she did not have to do it – she simply did it to help a colleague. She is the same person in all interactions: individual or group, public or private.

Words or phrases used to describe Sonia Alves-Viveiros:

- Kind,
- Dependable,
- Consistent,
- Positive Presence,
- Skilled at networking, and
- Uses authority well.

Strengths: Exceptional networker, excellent mentor and colleague, helpful to municipal leadership throughout the state.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Ken DeRoberts – CEO, SGR Firm, NJ 908-930-0232

Mr. DeRoberts has known Ms. Alves-Viveiros since 2022. His firm oversees all financial operations for the City of Edison.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros has an excellent grasp on finances and budget. She applies good public policy and public management. When approaching the budget, she asks good questions and then passes along helpful directions to department managers.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is exceptional at meeting deadlines with financial reports. She is organized and manages multiple departments. When attending public council meetings, she is ready with the necessary reports and information. She understands that while she is responsible for managing departments, she also must answer to the governing body of the city.

Reference Notes

Sonia Alves-Viveiros

A strength of Ms. Alves-Viveiros is that when she does not know the answer, she does not guess – she tells them honestly that she will get back to them with the information. She gathers the information by talking to respective departments as well as her own research and delivering the information in the time she promised.

In a town like Edison, it is constantly stressful. Ms. Alves-Viveiros maintains decorum and gives a fresh approach to dealing with issues. She never collapses under stress. She brings a great energy to the city leadership.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is experienced at dealing with professionals. When needed, she is not afraid to call and follow up to get responses. At council meetings, she maintains respect.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros has been integral with labor negotiations. She is just now completing eight new contracts. She completed it with fairness and benefitting taxpayers. She has contributed to a better system, including the health benefits for workers. Both the city and the union were pleased with the results.

Ms. Sonia Alves-Viveiros would make an effective city manager in any city, as she has already proved in Edison. She would be much missed.

Words or phrases used to describe Sonia Alves-Viveiros:

- Responsible,
- Honest,
- Hard working,
- Talented,
- Good Temperament, and
- Creative.

Strengths: An inquisitive and prepared individual, she seeks to improve conditions for citizens through diligent work and research.

Weaknesses: She is a bit overambitious. For the town of Edison, she needs a business deputy administrator, and it has been put in the budget because her office is so busy. She has resisted hiring someone because she does not want to cost the citizens more money, and simply works harder.

Matthew Watkins – Former Mayor, Bloomfield, NJ 973-619-3954

Mr. Watkins has known Ms. Alves-Viveiros since 2017. They met through a mutual work connection, and have their work association since. They currently work together: she as the City Manager for Edison, New Jersey; Mr. Watkins as a consultant for the City.

Reference Notes

Sonia Alves-Viveiros

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is very thorough with her job, and has an outstanding record for completion of work on schedule. She takes charge and gives direction clearly. She meets with police and firefighters and holds her own. She exudes her authority without having to remind people of it. She commands a good presence.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros brings a great deal of experience and knowledge to her role as City Manager. She will engage in conversation to learn others' opinions and is willing to change her opinion. She is simultaneously a leader and team player.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros presents herself with authority. She is firm in a good way: standing in public meetings when insults are being thrown and maintaining a good presence. She does not engage in it or allow it to escalate. She is poised and diplomatic in all circumstances. She has control over her emotional response, and treats others with respect and dignity. She handles the public spotlight well.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is involved with hiring personnel and executes good decisions. She handles labor negotiations with firmness. She approaches business quickly and is professional at work: taking in information, and then clarifying. She takes exceptional notes for reference, gathering information and clarifying as needed. Her methodical approach yields results. In tense situations with firefighters and police officers, she handles herself well and remains calm. This approach has helped to create respectful bonds throughout the city departments.

She is quick to process with a sharp and active mind. Not afraid to work, Ms. Alves-Viveiros accomplishes a great amount of work. Her ability to balance work and family life is phenomenal. She attends community events with her family.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros has a history of working in and navigating tough towns. She understands the role of public servant and the appropriate unwritten rules and procedures that are expected. She is a rare talent among municipal leaders. She is valuable to the city and state.

Words or phrases used to describe Sonia Alves-Viveiros:

- Calm,
- Deliberate,
- Kind,
- Advancing,
- Committed, and
- Trilingual.

Strengths: A bright professional who is knowledgeable in the municipal leadership field; continually working to improve himself and the city.

Weaknesses: None identified.

**Reference Notes
Sonia Alves-Viveiros**

Victor De Luca – Former Mayor, Maplewood, NJ 973-868-4611

Mr. De Luca has known Ms. Alves-Viveiros since 2016. He was the Mayor of Maplewood, and she was hired to be the Assistant Business Administrator.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is eager to learn. She is open to different ideas and explores alternative ways to approach problems. She will both make recommendations and listen to recommendations from others. She keeps awareness of different projects simultaneously. Due to her superb organization skills, she stays on top of tasks and directs the work. She understands when department heads can do their own work, and when to step in to help.

One example of this happened when different departments within the City had overlapping operations. The Department of Public Works oversees parks and fields while the Department of Recreation uses them. There was a great deal of tension. Ms. Alves-Viveiros scheduled and moderated meetings. She required shared communication, which helped solve the problem.

In her role, Ms. Alves-Viveiros oversaw mundane tasks to very serious issues. When some department heads were underperforming, she researched the issues to know how to proceed. Her recommendations about corrective action and who to renew or not renew was taken seriously. She was involved with hiring new personnel, and her recommendations and reporting to elected officials was superior.

Known as an innovator, Ms. Alves-Viveiros researched what other towns were doing and implemented best practices for the City. She constantly asked how others were approaching similar problems. Her strength was being willing to consider new ideas, and helping others in municipal leadership convert systems and structures. She helped to improve the technology to the extent they could. These changes have remained in place. She was willing to consider doing things differently – and to help others think differently.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros maintains a positive relationship with elected officials. She sought out the Mayor and met with him every Friday on a standing basis. They conversed about what could be done more efficiently and better for the community. They maintained an ongoing conversation. She also sustained positive relationships with other members of the governing body. She made sure they all had the same information in a timely manner to sustain the equal positions of the township committee.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros was present at committee meetings, held twice a month. She also kept them informed by a weekly bulletin. She had an open door policy and people were welcome to approach her throughout the day. If something was going to hit the press, she informed them immediately so they could be prepared. She recognized their responsibility to be informed, so that they could deal with the community.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros did deal proactively with a personnel situation at the local pool. In the summer, many college and high school students are employed. A manager was verbally

Reference Notes

Sonia Alves-Viveiros

harassing some of the young women. It had been occurring for some period of time before being reported to the Department Head, and then to Ms. Alves-Viveiros. She was proactive in responding and holding an investigation. Her quick response was appreciated by the community and those affected.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros worked hard within the City's protocols and procedures. The City required many checkoffs, and she was adept at cooperation and consensus. She needed the elected officials to be on board, and became skilled at working with them. Her flexibility and communication was an asset to progress.

Mr. De Luca gives full support to Ms. Alves-Viveiros as a city manager in any city. He is still sad that she left Bloomfield, as she ran the day-to-day operation for the City efficiently and with innovation. He recognizes her movement through jobs as forward and upward. He does not know anything in her history that is controversial.

Words or phrases used to describe Sonia Alves-Viveiros:

- Inquisitive,
- Complete,
- Committed,
- Fun,
- Connected, and
- Multicultural.

Strengths: A diligent worker with exceptional communication, cooperation and consensus.

Weaknesses: She was not an exceptional writer. She can convey messages much better when spoken. This skill has improved over time.

Catherine Melendez - Executive Assistant, City of Englewood, NJ 201-745-5675

Ms. Melendez has known Ms. Alves-Viveiros since 2020 when she was hired as the City Manager for Englewood. She brought a youthful energy to the city, which was needed and overdue.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is extremely knowledgeable. She is not afraid to execute what needs to be done. An excellent writer, she is fluent with technology and how to best use it for communication in real time. In addition, she is open to in person meetings with staff, elected officials, and citizens. Ms. Alves-Viveiros is a well-rounded city manager and brought innovation to the area.

Reference Notes

Sonia Alves-Viveiros

When Hurricane Ida occurred, Ms. Alves-Viveiros mobilized to help affected residents. She ordered multiple sump pumps and mobilized the various departments to help residences. She was the sole leader with this endeavor: personally leading the efforts and physical labor to help citizens. She worked with all departments to complete this time-sensitive issue. She was a rallying point for the city, bringing energy for the work.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros has good financial skills. She handled the budget for the city. She was very involved with hiring personnel. She made good decisions of which individuals match the job requirements.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is present and prepared for public meetings. Englewood is considered a tough town with many generational citizens. The sentiment is generally if you were not raised here, you do not belong. She deals with it and handles it well.

Ms. Melendez is not aware of anything controversial in Ms. Alves-Viveiros' background. She considers Ms. Alves-Viveiros one of the best city managers she has had the opportunity to assist. She gives full support to Ms. Alves-Viveiros continued work as a city manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Sonia Alves-Viveiros:

- Tough cookie,
- Passionate about job,
- Honest,
- Smart,
- Positive, and
- Energy.

Strengths: A determined leader that works well under pressure. Brings change and energy to revitalize areas.

Weaknesses: She is very passionate about her job. When residents verbally attacked her at meetings, she took their comments to heart. Though not shown outwardly, it affected her.

Edroy Jenkins - Director of Public Works, City of Englewood, NJ 201-486-7141

Mr. Jenkins has known Ms. Alves-Viveiros since 2020 when she was hired by Englewood as the City Manager. Mr Jenkins was the Director of Public Works.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros has excellent job performance. She is a competent leader with strong communication skills. She gets along well with her subordinates.

Reference Notes

Sonia Alves-Viveiros

As an innovator, Ms. Alves-Viveiros stands above the rest. When new problems are discussed, she surprises department heads with the scope and success she reaches quickly. She is customer service oriented and seeks to help the city. She represents city leadership well when attending community meetings.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros converses well with the public in group and individual settings. She takes time to listen to ideas and concerns. She understands that in public government, listening is essential to creating trust with the public. She also takes time with different departments to converse with employees. When questions arrive that she does not know the answer to, she will research and respond quickly after completing research.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros' ability to solve problems is above average. She categorizes problems by their impact, and then works first with those that have the most worth. She works on one project until it is completed, and then moves to the next. She works hard and smart, and the combination results in her accomplishment more than seems possible in a workday.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros knows how to work within a budget. When given a budget, she makes it work. Her financial skills are superior.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros worked overtime during Hurricane Ida. She is very capable during a crisis, stepping in to help residents' issues. She understood the issues in real time and solved problems quickly. She helped individuals and families that were displaced relocate to warming stations. She helped with managing the emergency response team, as well as showing up and personally helping with cleanup.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is already working as a city manager, and has enormous capability to work in other cities with the same level of success. Mr. Jenkins is not aware of any controversy involving Ms. Alves-Viveiros. Any city would be thrilled to have her as a hired official.

Words or phrases used to describe Sonia Alves-Viveiros:

- Go-getter,
- Helpful,
- Punctual,
- Amiable,
- Teachable, and
- Present.

Strengths: A competent leader that is pleasant to work with, capable during a crisis. Organized in her approach which yields immediate and long-lasting results.

Weaknesses: She works so hard on every task, that she will overachieve on tasks that are not as imperative.

Reference Notes
Sonia Alves-Viveiros

Matthew Hale, Ph.D. - Professor, Seton Hall University, NJ 609-240-2171

Mr. Hale has known Ms. Alves-Viveiros since 2010 when she was a student in the MPA program at Seton Hall University. Dr. Hale is a professor in the MPA program.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros and Mr. Hale have stayed in contact since her MPA. They set up a program where MPA students interned with Ms. Alves-Viveiros and others to gain municipal work experience. The experience has helped many MPA students be better qualified when they complete their studies. Her specific role in this program has been critical to the growth of individual students.

As a graduate student, Ms. Alves-Viveiros was incredibly diligent. A pragmatic individual, she sought to know how theories applied to practical work. She kept her professors on their toes by asking for connections between the theoretical and the concrete.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is involved with the League of Municipalities in New Jersey. Good at networking, she keeps up connections with previous colleagues and professors. She increases the success of those entering to work with local government.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros can speak truth to power. She is an effective communicator. She is direct and discusses facts without emotion. She can present reports to professors and elected officials with confidence, due to her preparation.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros shines as a mentor. She values the person and the experience, and works hard to help them succeed. When an intern is not hitting work objectives, Ms. Alves-Viveiros takes time to train and teach them. She never gives up on an intern, but instead commits to helping them learn through positive mentoring. Interns that have been with her are then hired to work in municipal government, a testament to her ability as a mentor.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros is an effective member of a team. Throughout the MPA program, there are many team projects. Her ability to work within a team is unparalleled. She capitalizes on everyone's strengths. She understood that each assignment and each group were different, and adjusted accordingly. She steps up and takes charge, or alternatively, steps back and completes the background work.

Ms. Alves-Viveiros never missed a deadline. She also took full opportunity to learn, rather than just hit the benchmarks. She met with Mr. Hale during office hours to ask for feedback on assignments to improve. The academic interchange provided learning greater than the finished product.

Reference Notes
Sonia Alves-Viveiros

Words or phrases used to describe Sonia Alves-Viveiros:

- Direct,
- Honest,
- Thoughtful,
- Diligent,
- Organized, and
- Disciplined.

Strengths: A diligent learner and agreeable team player; vested in helping other elected officials find success to promote strong local governments in a large region.

Weaknesses: She likes to know the beginning to the end and works sequentially. If a problem requires creative thinking, she struggled. She could, however, come up with a structure to help those with creative thinking succeed.

Prepared by: Brooke Krim
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2024/07/26/edison-sports-building/74532214007/>

July 26, 2024

Is the new Edison Sports Building a 'money pit?' Here's the new cost

By: Suzanne Russell

EDISON - The cost of the new Edison Sports Building has gone up again. The project, originally envisioned as a \$5 million investment, has more than doubled in price and is now up to more than \$11 million. That prompted one resident to say the project is "a money pit." The Township Council on Wednesday approved a \$96,814.05 change order for more stormwater piping and modification to the basement. The work includes additional drainage due to field conditions, installation of gas piping not originally included in the contract drawings, additional excavation and site work and additional steel support for decorative screens. Councilman John Poyner said there needed to be modifications to the foundation when adjustments were made to the roof. The change order amends the contract amount of \$11,071,247.45. In addition the council awarded a contract to Colliers Engineering & Design of Holmdel for engineering services such as construction management and architectural construction contract administration services for project at a cost not to exceed \$378,000.

The new firm was selected to address the larger scope of work, according to township officials. "Our intent is to engage with a new firm for the architectural services but at the same time engage in construction management due to the issues that have arisen out of the roofing change order," Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** said at Monday's meeting.

"This is an increase in the cost of the project. However, we're hoping with the construction management oversight that it will be a lot more efficient in terms of the cost and any other potential issues that may arise. Having someone on site to see exactly between the contractor and subcontractors that everything is exactly the way it is supposed to be, including all of the architectural design work so that there is a much higher level of oversight and hands-on approach to this project given the pricing," she said. **Alves-Viveiros** said the township has "learned from our mistakes" which is why the administration came to the council to hire a construction manager. She said the funding will come out of capital and the township is hoping to recover some of the costs.

Earlier in the week a resident questioned why the town didn't hire a project manager at the onset. In May the Township Council authorized a \$187,433.40 change order to revise the metal roof panels on the pre-engineered Edison Sports Building. That change order amended the sports building contract with Epic Management of Piscataway to \$10.8 million, the resolution stated. Township officials said that to move forward with the building, Edison needed to make sure the roofing material was ordered and done correctly. "That roof shouldn't have created a problem if you had a project manager on the site looking at the plans," resident Mary Ann Hennessey said at Monday's meeting. "This is in my opinion, a disgrace. It keeps costing more money for stupid reasons." The project involves the removal of the existing buildings and trailers at the Edison

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Jets Football Field, 370 Central Ave., and construction of a pre-engineered metal building with a surrounding one- or two-story podium structure framed of steel columns, steel beams and a composite metal deck slab. Both structures will be supported on concrete shallow foundations. Wet weather earlier this year delayed the construction schedule. The building is slated to be used for cheerleading, wrestling, football, basketball, lacrosse and other activities year-round.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://edisonreporter.com/edison-settles-discrimination-lawsuit-with-police-officer-council-left-in-the-dark/>

July 8, 2024

Edison Settles Discrimination Lawsuit with Police Officer, Council Left in the Dark

By The Edison Reporter Staff

Edison Township has quietly settled a racial discrimination lawsuit filed by decorated and respected veteran police officer Nicole Fields for \$90,000, with the Township Council being kept unaware of the agreement. The settlement, approved by the Central Jersey Joint Insurance Fund (JIF), addresses Fields' claims of racial discrimination, hostile work environment, discriminatory failure to promote, and retaliation within the Edison Police Department. Fields, represented by Nancy Erika Smith of Smith Mullin, PC, alleged a pattern of discriminatory practices that hampered her career advancement and created a toxic work environment. Despite denying any wrongdoing, the Edison Township agreed to a comprehensive settlement that includes monetary compensation and significant policy changes without informing and without any public input from the Township Council.

Key Points of the Settlement

Monetary Compensation: Fields will receive \$90,000 as a full settlement of her claims.

Revised Promotional Process: Within 90 days of the current promotional list expiring, a new process will be implemented, emphasizing objective criteria like seniority, education, and disciplinary history.

Diverse Interview Panel: The interview panel for promotions will include at least one member from a racial or ethnic minority group.

Non-Retaliation: The township has committed to fair treatment of Fields, adhering to the same policies and practices as other officers.

Despite the significant financial and policy implications of the settlement, the Edison Township Council was not informed or involved in the approval process. This has raised concerns about transparency and accountability, particularly given that Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** sits on the board of commissioners for the JIF.

The lack of council involvement in the settlement raises questions about the JIF's decision-making process and the township's oversight of such matters. Critics argue that such settlements, especially those involving significant policy changes, should be subject to public scrutiny and council approval. The case highlights the challenges faced by minority employees in law enforcement and the ongoing efforts to address systemic discrimination within police departments. While the settlement represents a victory for Fields, it also underscores the need for greater transparency and accountability in resolving such disputes.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2024/06/12/edison-taxes/74057871007/>

June 12, 2024

Not everyone happy with Edison mayor's budget address

Suzanne Russell

MyCentralJersey.com

EDISON – Mayor Sam Joshi gave a 25-minute presentation of a \$175.9 million municipal budget for 2024 which will increase the municipal tax rate by 2.5% that left some council members longing for more time to question the mayor's spending plan. Joshi gave the budget presentation to the Township Council during a special meeting shortly after 5 p.m. Monday, before the governing body's scheduled 6 p.m. work session. Monday was selected after Joshi had a scheduling conflict on June 13, the original date for the budget presentation. Some residents also opposed the 5 p.m. time for the budget presentation because of the conflict with work schedules, while a council member said the budget presentation "felt very rushed."

Councilman Ajay Patil complained it's unfair that council members were only getting five minutes each to ask questions after the mayor's presentation. "If you don't have time, come back and answer all the questions," Patil said, adding the budget presentation could have been scheduled for another day to give council members enough time to ask questions. Patel also expressed concern about the amount of debt Edison has taken on. Joshi, however, reminded Patil, who has served on the council for several years, that the mayor's budget presentation began after former Mayor Thomas Lankey took office and previous mayors did not give budget presentations. Joshi added the township debt is paid back over years, not at one time.

Council President Nishith Patel said council members would get another chance to ask questions before voting on the budget in a few weeks. A public hearing and vote on the budget is scheduled for June 26.

Councilman Richard Brescher, who was also dissatisfied with the five minutes allotted to ask questions, got up and called the council president, the mayor and the meeting "a joke" and walked off the dais with his belongings.

But Councilman John Poyner said he felt the budget puts the township in a good financial position, adding the planned sale of a liquor license and state aid could add several tax points that could be put into reserve for next year's budget.

During his presentation, Joshi said the \$175.9 million budget includes \$109.6 million in local taxes. The non-property tax revenue appropriations include \$12.7 million in surplus, \$706,800 in American Rescue Plan funds, \$4.6 million in construction code fees and \$3.3 million in payments in lieu of taxes. He said the top three appropriations were for insurance at \$35.4 million, the police department at \$32.2 million and the fire department at \$22.4 million.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** explained insurance rates have increased, which is why that appropriation has gone up.

The mayor noted there has been an increase in staffing levels in nearly every township department from last year to this year. The biggest increases were in public works which increased from 130 to 139 employees, police which increased from 234 to 242 and administration which increased from 20 to 27 workers. The total number of township employees has increased from 668 to 703, he said. "We are simply getting more things done," the mayor said.

Under the budget, a property owner with a home assessed at \$183,400 would pay \$5,806.44 in school taxes, \$2,708.82 for township services, \$18.34 toward open space, \$1,806.49 for county services and \$166.69 for library services, the mayor said.

Joshi said that despite the record high inflation over the past few years, the township has achieved property tax stabilization while significantly improving the community. "Residents have said over and over they are happy with seeing the improvements in the community while knowing their tax dollars are not dramatically increasing. It's fair to say we have finally achieved property tax stabilization," the mayor said.

Councilman Joseph Coyle agreed a lot has gotten done, noting the township has 196 police officers, and plans to hire four more before the end of the year.

Township officials anticipate Edison will be in almost as good a position with surplus funds next year, as this year. Edison is using \$12.7 million in surplus this year with just under \$5 million remaining but expects to generate more through the year to end up with \$15 million to \$16 million. The township also has reserve funds to cover any potential exposure from tax appeals.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2024/05/28/edison-jets-toth-center/73816668007/>

May 28, 2024

Edison council OKs more funding to advance two big development projects

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – Two big-ticket development projects, one involving a health center and the other a \$10 million sports building, appear to be moving forward, following nearly \$250,000 in change orders approved by the Township Council last week. On Wednesday council members unanimously approved a \$60,000 change order for additional site remediation and removal of soil contaminated by previously removing underground storage tanks at the Toth Health and Senior Center Renovation project.

Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** explained earlier in the week that in 2019 there was a permit that wasn't closed out correctly and this corrects that issue and the remediation work so the town can work on the building. The change order increases the total contract award to \$5.5 million according to the resolution. The resolution also marks the fourth change order to the township's contract with Shorelands Construction Inc. in Monmouth Beach. Last year the council awarded Shorelands Construction a \$5.29 million contract to renovate and expand the Dr. William Toth Health Center on Idlewild Road.

The building, which dates to the 1950s, is being expanded by nearly 3,000 square feet to provide programming similar to the activities at the Edison Senior Center on Woodbridge Avenue. The new space is expected to include a large meeting space for events and activities, reading room, full kitchen and a common lounge and will also allow Edison to expand its vaccinations, health screenings and other essential services to older residents.

More controversial was a \$187,433.40 change order to revise the type of metal roof panels on the pre-engineered Edison Sports Building from a Perlin Bear Rib system to a standing seam roof, which also was approved by the council. The change order amends the sports building contract with Epic Management of Piscataway to \$10.8 million, according to the resolution.

Alves-Viveiros said the town is having potential legal issues with one of the professionals and is getting another architect to look at the project. The change order is to move the project along, but the town will be looking to recoup the money. "In order for us to do any other part of the building, the anchors, the walls, everything else, we need to make sure the roofing material is ordered and is done correctly," she said last Monday.

Another town official said the inability to meet the roof's energy efficiency and 20-year water tightness warranty is among the reasons for the change order. Last year the council approved a \$10 million contract for the construction of a new sports recreation facility, more than twice the \$5 million originally earmarked for the project. The project involves the removal of the existing buildings and trailers at the Edison Jets Football Field, 370 Central Ave., and construction of a

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

pre-engineered metal building with a surrounding one- or two-story podium structure framed of steel columns, steel beams and a composite metal deck slab. Both structures will be supported on concrete shallow foundations, according to public documents. The building is slated to be used for cheerleading, wrestling, football, basketball, lacrosse and other activities year-round. The new Edison Sports Recreation Center will be located on Central Avenue near the Edison Jets youth football field.

On Monday, Stephanie Woomer, who serves on the Edison Jets executive board, said the building has already been plagued by weather delays and she's seen social media posts complaining about the building's cost. Woomer said the girls flag football program is looking to grow and add tournaments. "We are grateful the Town Council approved the building, however without the change order being approved, we would be at the mercy of waiting for insurance to continue construction which has already been plagued with weather issues. Every day we are stalled is another day the kids of Edison do not get access to the space," Woomer said. "While millions of dollars have been allocated for this building it would be shameful to make these kids continue to wait because of \$187,000. I implore you to please pass this change order."

Dan Boslet, who also serves in the Edison Jets executive board, said he understands the change order money is a bridge loan that the town pays to keep construction going, and hopefully the errors and omissions insurance from the engineer or architect, who ever made the plan, should be responsible for reimbursing it. He added insurance companies make you wait, which only delays construction of the building, and the construction company would charge the town for every day they are not allowed to work, which would result in higher costs for the project. "There are many children that are waiting for this with bated breath and any delay would hurt their chances of getting into it this coming winter. It's not that far away that we have time to burn," said Boslet, adding all the rain this spring has delayed days of work which makes it a long shot the building will be ready for the winter.

Another resident said there wouldn't be so many change orders if the township had a project manager.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2024/05/10/edison-amboy-avenue-jade-dynasty/73614122007/>

May 10, 2024

Edison looks to purchase commercial property listed by township councilman

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – A \$29.8 million capital improvement bond ordinance, which included more than \$5 million to acquire the Jade Dynasty restaurant property on Amboy Avenue, which is \$3 million more than the current property sale price, was scrapped by the Township Council. No reason was announced for removing the ordinance from the agenda and it's unclear if the bond ordinance, which also includes funding for many other projects, will be introduced at a future meeting.

The council's decision on Wednesday not to introduce the ordinance comes two days after the planned acquisition sparked controversy because the commercial property at 925 Amboy Ave., in the Clara Barton section of town, is listed for sale at \$2.2 million. The website The Real Estate Book lists Joseph Coyle, a township councilman, as the property's listing agent.

Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** said the 3,500-square-foot building on a .65 acre site with about 50 parking spaces is being considered for conversion into a community center, at residents' request.

Clara Barton residents have repeatedly called for the town to ban four-story high-density developments along Amboy Avenue, especially on sites like the Jade Dynasty and the former Stewart's restaurant properties near the New Jersey Turnpike. The residents are looking to preserve the existing character of their neighborhood.

Alves-Viveiros said the \$5 million was for the acquisition, renovation, furniture and fixtures. "You're going to buy it for \$2 million and then you are going to build something for \$2 million. Can you tell me what you have built here in this township for \$2 million?" Councilman Richard Brescher asked. **Alves-Viveiros** said she understands there would be improvements to the existing building.

Brescher, who has dined at the restaurant, said you wouldn't be able to play basketball in the existing one-story building, but maybe badminton. "This is the silliest idea," Brescher said.

On Monday night **Alves-Viveiros** explained that besides the \$5 million for Jade Dynasty property, the \$29.8 million bond ordinance also included more than \$1 million for various police and public safety equipment and projects such as an addition to the police garage and \$1 million for the acquisition of a new fire engine to replace a more than 15-year-old vehicle.

Also included in the bond ordinance was \$6.5 million for the engineering department to cover all the township road paving and resurfacing work; \$250,000 for drainage and stormwater work as well as more than \$500,000 for design, procurement and installation of solar powered feedback

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signs at Brotherhood, Ethel, Old Post Boulevard and McKinley streets; \$250,000 for various road striping projects throughout the township and \$150,000 for the design, construction and installation of pedestrian flashing beacon system at Old Post Road and the Boulevard of Eagles.

The bond also included \$4.3 million for the public works department to acquire vehicles and equipment such as dump trucks, backhoes, paving and salt spreading equipment, tree removal vehicles, trailers and other mobile equipment. **Alves-Viveiros** said a lot of the existing equipment is about 20 to 30 years old.

The bond ordinance also included \$1.5 million for various building improvements and renovations, construction, repairs, lighting alarm and HVAC systems for various buildings; \$5 million for various improvements to the town's 36 parks including renovations and improvements to park facilities and \$1.6 million for the installation of fuel tanks and related systems at one of the garages.

There was also \$355,000 for the purchase of recreation department vehicles and equipment; \$50,000 for the purchase of various equipment in the purchasing department including a new postage machine; \$300,000 for the technology department to acquire and install network infrastructure components, switches and upgrade telecommunications systems and \$2.1 million for professional services.

If approved the bond ordinance would have added \$28 million to the township's nearly \$200 million debt, township officials said

The council also removed from the agenda a \$1.4 million bond ordinance for improvements to the solid waste collection district.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2024/02/20/edison-internet-tv-municipal-broadband-xfinity-comcast-optimum/72599815007/>

February 20, 2024

Edison gets \$2M grant to kick-start municipal broadband but feasibility questions remain

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The township has received a \$2 million grant from the state Department of Community Affairs to expand municipal broadband services. The Township Council passed a resolution last week accepting the grant. Edison now has a 24-month period to build a portion of the infrastructure, part of which is a server, as well as a business plan which is expected to be completed soon, officials said. Previously officials have said the business plan would look at the strengths and weaknesses of municipal broadband and determine market competition. A consultant would then analyze the best approach for Edison.

The total cost for the broadband structure has not been disclosed. The \$2 million is considered a start, according to Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**.

The idea of high-speed municipal broadband in Edison has grown from the quest for faster, more reliable and more affordable internet service in town, where Optimum has been the major provider and residents with old lines have complained of service interruptions and other problems. Residents and officials have cited a need for more competition.

The grant comes just as Comcast Xfinity will hold two video conference public hearings on Feb. 27 to receive comments on its plan to provide TV service in Edison, as part of a Jan. 30 application filed with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, Office of Cable Television & Telecommunications, according to public documents.

Last year the Council approved an ordinance to allow Comcast Xfinity to wire Edison for the service. The plan calls for Comcast to construct its own fiber network. The company has said it plans to bring its Xfinity 10G Network to Edison providing residents with access to Comcast's full suite of Xfinity and Comcast Business services. Under the agreement with the township, Comcast would pay Edison an annual fee of 3.5 percent of gross revenues.

But both residents and officials remain uncertain about the township's broadband plans, especially since **Alves-Viveiros** said she's not aware of any other municipalities in the state that have started a broadband, so Edison would be the first.

Resident Joel Bassoff said there are questions about whether any municipality has been able to run a municipal broadband service profitably. "My research shows the only (town) arguably that has been able to do it profitably is Chattanooga, Tennessee, that is a service area with maybe three times the population of Edison, and there are studies that indicate that even their profit numbers are probably misstated because they don't appropriately account for the capital costs of establishing the system," Bassoff said.

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Another resident said these companies have huge infrastructures and he questioned how Edison would be able to set up a whole broadband internet cable company, with equipment, parts and technology, computers, a call center, technicians and insurance, when there are already other companies doing the job. "This whole thing is ridiculous," the resident said, adding Chattanooga is not showing a profit and municipal broadband has been a failure in other towns that have tried it. "We should try to work out better relationship, better alliances with Comcast."

Councilman Richard Brescher also isn't sold on the municipal broadband idea. "I don't see the feasibility in it. I haven't seen the business plan for it yet. There are people on this dais and in the administration that think that they are Thomas Edison or Elon Musk, and I think this is more like Tesla and it's not going anywhere, unless I see a business plan that makes sense and the numbers make sense. To me this seems like a scam," he said.

But Council President Nishith Patel said he hopes it works out. He recounted a story he read about a man frustrated with the service he was getting that built his own broadband for 30 homes and was successful, and he received money to cover 100 more houses. "It is possible to do it. It's not that complex. I think it's necessary if it's feasible, and I believe the state believes in us. And I hope that we can get this done for the residents and provide them another alternative beside the monopolies they have now," Patel said.

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Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2024/01/30/edison-stelton-community-center/72357161007/>

January 30, 2024

Edison greenlights \$3.7 million makeover of Stelton Community Center

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The Stelton Community Center on Plainfield Avenue will be getting a much-needed makeover to make it usable again as part of a nearly \$8 million capital bond improvement package recently approved by the Township Council. The bond ordinance includes \$3.7 million for renovations, repairs and alterations to the Stelton Community Center, of which \$1.6 million is earmarked for roof repairs and other initial costs. The \$7.9 million bond ordinance also includes \$1.5 million for improvements, renovations and repairs to various municipal buildings; \$500,000 for furniture, fixtures and other equipment in various municipal buildings; \$1.4 million for a backup generator for the municipal building; \$300,000 for improvements, renovations and repairs to township firehouses; \$250,000 for road signs and \$175,000 for design work to improve and repair the Edison Animal Shelter, which could include building a second floor to house a medical examination room. But mostly the council and some residents focused on the community center, a former school building constructed in 1925 and expanded in 1949 that was closed in 2018 due to lack of attention to needed repairs and maintenance. The large building has roof, mold and asbestos issues, which require major repairs. Municipal services, including a sheltered workshop program, were relocated out of the structure. The building is on the state Department of Environmental Protection's Recreation and Open Space Inventory which prevents the township from expanding the building's footprint. Resident Walter Stochel, who serves on the township's Open Space Advisory Committee, said the building also has many beautiful architectural elements that he hoped will be preserved as part of the restoration. Stochel, who read a letter from the Open Space Advisory Committee supporting the building's restoration, said the township should also consider placing a display of historic photos of the building and the Stelton neighborhood inside the structure, building a rain garden and replacing the parking lot with pervious pavement to reduce stormwater runoff. Stochel said the township might also want to acquire the adjacent property to expand Stelton Park. With nearby Thomas Jefferson Middle School and the Edison Main Library, Stochel said the building is not just a community center but the center of the community.

Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** said the Health Department went in and looked at some of the rooms, which are fairly large. She said the township is looking to retrofit some of those spaces to accommodate senior services, Health Department and recreational activities, all of which are included in the \$3.7 million. She previously said the building would be used to provide programs for seniors as well as children with disabilities. "It will be a restored operable building," **Alves-Viveiros** said, adding the administration has been active in pursuing grant funding to provide more money for programs. "The goal is to make the space usable and operable." No timetable was announced for when the work is expected to begin. Council Vice President Margot Harris said she sees a lot of potential in the building's future. "It's a real diamond in the rough," she said.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/12/13/edison-animal-shelter/71890745007/>

December 13, 2023

Edison to scale back animal control: 'We can't bring in any more'

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The township is ending its animal shared control service agreement with Piscataway this year to help address overcrowding at the Edison Animal Shelter. The township will continue its service with three other towns, Dunellen, Highland Park and Metuchen. The Highland Park agreement was renewed last year, and the Dunellen and Metuchen agreements expire at the end of 2024, according to Township Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**.

"We can't bring in any more animals," Township Council Vice President Margot Harris said at Monday's agenda meeting about the need to shed the shared services with other municipalities, as Edison works to get the animal shelter in better working order following an inspection report finding the facility overcrowded, too small and understaffed.

Piscataway has had a shared services agreement with Edison for several years, according to Gene Wilk, Piscataway's public information officer. "Although Piscataway has been negotiating since June with Edison regarding this shared services agreement, we were notified by Edison about two weeks ago that it plans to cease our contract at the end of December," Wilk said. "We are seeking a four-month extension of shared services with Edison as we consider what our long-term options may be so we can go out to bid for future services." Wilk said Piscataway has retained services for its annual free rabies clinics on Jan. 27 and Feb. 3.

Alves-Viveiros said there has been no discussion about discontinuing the shared services agreements with the other towns. She said Piscataway was a huge burden to Edison in terms of the intake of animals. "That was about a third of our issues and the overcrowding," **Alves-Viveiros** said, adding she notified the Piscataway business administrator about the termination of the shared services agreement.

Harris, who recently attended an Edison Animal Shelter Committee meeting with Councilman Richard Brescher; Ross Licitra, the Monmouth County SPCA executive director who has assumed oversight of the Edison shelter; the shelter veterinarian and the shelter manager, said there are many structural problems with the shelter. The building, located in a corner of the Municipal Complex parking lot, needs to be expanded and renovated, work which is expected to cost between \$2.5 and \$3 million.

The Edison Animal Shelter is about 2,000 square feet. Monmouth County has a 20,000-square-foot animal shelter which services the entire county. Proceeds from the Monmouth County SPCA shelter's thrift store benefit the shelter, Harris said. "While we can't look to completely replicate what the (Monmouth County SPCA) has we can certainly use them as a model on a smaller scale," Harris said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

The Edison shelter has not had a budget for 2022-23, and all the expenses were charged to a trust account which included donations, according to **Alves-Viveiros**. For 2024 all the costs associated with the day-to-day operations of the shelter will be part of the township budget. The shelter employees, who make about \$35,000 a year, are overextended, officials said. Over the summer the shelter was overcrowded with 23 dogs and 86 cats.

"I'm optimistic that we are on the same page and that we are going to be headed in a very positive direction," Harris said. Harris said there are two upcoming pet adoption days. On Dec. 17 from 1 to 4 p.m., a Barks and Brews event will be held at the South 40 Brewing Company, 110 Newfield Ave., Suite 2, Raritan Center, Edison; and on Jan. 13 from noon to 4 p.m. at Hailey's Harp and Pub, 400 Main St., Metuchen. "There are some lovely animals that are still in the shelter that would be great pets and great family members," Harris said.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/09/30/edison-township-nj/70983212007/>
September 30, 2023

Edison punts shipping container purchase for township departments

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The township doesn't want to be boxed in. Plans to buy 11 shipping containers for more than \$90,000 to be used by five township departments, are on hold, at least for the next two weeks. Township Council members on Wednesday unanimously voted to table a resolution to buy the shipping containers.

Plans called for four shipping containers for the Department of Public Works Division of Roads for \$33,320, two shipping containers for the Department of Recreation for \$16,660, two shipping containers for the Department of Public Works Municipal Garage for \$16,660, one shipping container for the Department of Health's Animal Shelter for \$8,330 and two shipping containers for the Department of Health's Senior Center for \$16,660 . "No one else on the planet is paying this much for a container," Councilman Richard Brescher said.

Four of the containers would be placed next to the garage for the Division of Roads to store utility items, said Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**. She added other containers would be stored in the parking lot behind the Municipal Building. She said the containers would be kept in a location that doesn't interfere with parking.

The containers would be used for storage while improvements are being made to buildings around town. In the future, if the containers are no longer needed, they could be auctioned, **Alves-Viveiros** said.

Brescher, who doesn't want to have containers on municipal property, also questioned whether the containers would be painted, and expressed concern they would attract graffiti. "We've lived all these years without these containers and now we're buying a bunch of them. I get needing one, but it just looks like we're trying to make it a cityscape," he said. "So are you going to paint them?"

Alves-Viveiros liked the suggestion of painting the containers, adding it could be an art initiative that she could present to the administration.

"It all looks like graffiti to me," Brescher said.

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Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/08/25/edison-school-crossing-guards/70667830007/>

August 25, 2023

Edison council tables plan to outsource school crossing guards. Now what?

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The school year will start with a combination of police officers and residents as school crossing guards after the Township Council decided on Wednesday to table plans to privatize the service. Following a lengthy discussion and questions raised by residents, Township Council members unanimously voted to table plans to hire a Connecticut company to provide crossing guards. Police Capt. Jason Gerba said until the Township Council decides what to do, police officers and the crossing guards the department has retained will man the posts when classes begin Sept. 6.

Edison has been looking to privatize crossing guards due to long-standing staffing shortages that often required police officers to cover those assignments at a significant cost to taxpayers. The township has 40 crossing guards for 53 posts. There is one unfilled post and 12 guards performing a double post, according to township officials. Edison spends about \$600,000 a year for crossing guards' salaries and about \$200,000 for the police officers who fill in on posts. "I believe there are certain functions of government that government should do. I believe sewer and water and crossing guards should be in-house," said Councilman Richard Brescher. "That we can't get people is an unacceptable answer to outsource." He suggested splitting \$200,000 for police among the 53 crossing guard posts, which he believes would lead to more people signing up to become crossing guards.

Council members were planning to hire Crossing Guard Services of Stamford, Connecticut under a \$900,000 contract for the next three years. The preliminary plans called for crossing guards to work 180 days, two posts per day with a minimum of three hours per post at a pay rate of \$19 an hour. The contract called for all township crossing guards in good standing to be offered positions with the company.

Police Chief Thomas Bryan, who said officers on crossing guard posts can't leave if an emergency arises, said Thursday he's disappointed the privatization plan didn't go through and the township will have to pay more money. But he said he's hopeful the crossing guard contract will come up for a vote at a council meeting next month.

Councilman Ajay Patil, who said he believes most crossing guards take the job for the passion, not the paycheck, expressed concern about the company being based in Connecticut, not Edison or even New Jersey.

Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** said the company's ownership is based in Connecticut, but has operations in Wayne, Demarest, Montclair and Parsippany. The company uses a pool of employees, including alternates.

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Patil questioned how the company would be able to attract more workers because it is not offering benefits and that they might transfer crossing guards to different posts. "To me there is no protection to our own residents, who are doing this thankless job. We should be looking to more out-of-the-box solutions," said Patil, who suggested possibly hiring retired police. He encouraged the administration to find other ways to hire more local residents who will be connected to the school children.

Residents questioned if the company would reimburse the town for the cost of having a police officer at a crossing guard post, at the hourly rate of \$65, if the guard doesn't show. Another resident asked if the company would be providing uniforms, stop signs, training and background checks for the crossing guards, while another questioned if current crossing guards could be guaranteed employment with the company.

Alves-Viveiros said she has been in contact with the crossing guards and their unions. She said the scope of work under the proposed contract includes offering all the current crossing guards their same positions. The company could also hire workers from out of town. **Alves-Viveiros** said the equipment provided by the company includes jackets, gloves, hats, stop sign, reflective vests, raincoats, whistles, badges and background checks. "We are hoping to not have any of our police officers make those crossings. This is all on the company to be able to do that," she said.

Another resident asked how the company would entice residents to become crossing guards, if the rate of pay remains unchanged and no other incentives, such as benefits, are offered. Township Attorney David Minchello said state law was changed in 2011 requiring employees to work a certain number of hours to be eligible for benefits and crossing guards don't qualify.

Alves-Viveiros said the company also was looking at offering higher pay rates.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/07/27/edison-animal-shelter/70461456007/>

July 27, 2023

Edison Animal Shelter ‘absolutely overrun’ by pandemic pets being returned

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – Though it may be overcrowded, the Edison Animal Shelter is clean and stocked with supplies, despite what some social media posts have alleged, according to a Township Council member. The township is considering whether to build an addition at the back of the shelter and may also look to some of the communities where Edison provides animal control services to help fund the construction. During Monday's Township Council work session, both Councilman Richard Brescher and Council Vice President Margot Harris mentioned they had both seen social media chatter about conditions at the animal shelter at the municipal complex across the parking lot from the Edison Police Department. Harris, a dog owner for 44 years, said because the social media posts contained "very disturbing" reports of the shelter not being clean and lacking supplies, she made an unannounced visit on Monday and met the new manager who took her on a tour of the facility. Brescher said he's heard the new manager is not a licensed animal control officer, but Harris said the manager has an animal control license. "I was very impressed and relieved with the condition of the shelter. The shelter was clean. They are absolutely overrun with pets right now. They have 86 cats, 23 dogs and they got nine huskies from a hoarding situation in Piscataway and one was pregnant," Harris said. She said the puppies were adopted and there are still four huskies left, one female and three males. Harris said the adoption fee for dogs is about \$175, which is among the lowest in the state. "They (the shelter) are busting at the seams, there is no question about it," Harris said, adding the facility was clean. The isolation section where there were three dogs were recovering from Parvo, a contagious dog virus, was being cleaned during her visit.

Harris said everything looked like it was in place, the facility was clean and there was no shortage of supplies. She said the manager indicated there was talk of possibly getting a new building because of the large number of animals. "We're talking about a central design of adding onto the building, not just the outside space, but the inside space so that we're a more welcoming environment to those that are seeking adoptions and are seeking our services at the shelter. This administration is looking to expand on that," said Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**, adding the township is looking to share that responsibility with the five towns that use the shelter as part of a shared services agreement. The Edison Animal Shelter/Animal Control serves Edison, Dunellen, Highland Park, Metuchen and Piscataway, according to the township's website. "We're looking to get some contribution from them to make larger capital improvements at the shelter," **Alves-Viveiros** said.

According to Harris, the shelter manager said the increase in the number of animals is mostly due to the end of the pandemic and people who formerly adopted pets and worked from home find they no longer have time to care for their pets because they've returned to their workplaces.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/07/26/edison-sports-recreation-center/70462816007/>

July 26, 2023

Edison OK's the "Ferrari" of youth sports buildings, a \$10M structure

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The Township Council approved a \$10.8 million contract for the construction of a new sports recreation facility, more than twice the \$5 million originally earmarked for the project. This comes after the Council in April rejected bids of \$10.8 million and \$14.1 million for the project, in an effort to allow more proposal options to be considered, Mayor Sam Joshi said at the time. Councilman Richard Brescher, who abstained during Wednesday's vote, acknowledged the project's price tag is much higher than the governing body anticipated. He asked the council to cut back on some of the expensive architectural features which have no impact on the children. "I'm not in favor of a \$10 million building," Brescher said. "I don't think we need to have a Ferrari here, and I think that's what we're building. It's all about the look, the show, not about the use." He explained the price for the sports facility, where work will involve the removal of the existing buildings and trailers at the Edison Jets Football Field, 370 Central Ave., went as high as \$12 million before the plan was reduced.

Township Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** said the project's funding comes from 2022 capital improvements and other bond ordinances. Public documents indicate the new sports facility will be a pre-engineered metal building with a surrounding one- or two-story podium structure framed of steel columns, steel beams and a composite metal deck slab. Both structures will be supported on concrete shallow foundations.

The heating, ventilation and air conditioning system will be dedicated for a sports area with high occupancy, as well as providing traditional systems for office and storage areas, according to the documents. The heating will be provided with an air source heat pump and supplemental hot water heater and the electrical system will include a dedicated transformer and emergency generator, the documents say. The building also will be equipped with new connections to water and sewer utilities as well as a fire alarm and sprinkler system and is slated to be used for cheerleading, wrestling, football, basketball, lacrosse and other activities year-round. The Township Council on Wednesday unanimously also approved a \$2.8 million contract to build a splash park at Papainni Park. The original proposal featured cultural artifacts reimagined as sprinklers, splash zones and tipping buckets of water, with a replica of the Edison Tower in the park's center. Councilwoman Joyce Ship-Freeman said that under a prior administration, the splash park was estimated to cost \$5 million and questioned if the size of this facility had been downsized. Brescher, however said he believes the \$5 million was for two splash parks, at opposite ends of the town. The township is hoping to break ground on some of the projects this fall, with work on the splash park expected to continue to the spring, while the sports facility is estimated to take about a year to complete.

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<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/07/05/is-edisons-winter-street-park-park-a-jungle-or-one-of-the-nicer-ones/70373483007/>

July 5, 2023

Is Edison's Winter Street Park park a 'jungle' or 'one of the nicer ones'?

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON - Some residents in the area of the Winter Street Park say the park is so overgrown with weeds, and has been in such poor condition since Superstorm Sandy more than a decade ago, that it needs to be renovated. "This park is a jungle, it is not a park anymore," said a resident who presented photos and a petition for the renovation to the Township Council last week. But another resident who brought her grandchild to the park on Saturday had a different opinion. "We've been to a lot of the parks," she said, "and this is one of the nicer ones."

The township's website lists Winter Street Park off Winter Street and Anita, George and Oliver avenues as having two basketball courts and a playground. The park however appears to have two playgrounds and a tennis court. The park sign says Durand Cormaci Park, which a 40-year resident said was named for a husband and wife who formerly lived at the edge of the park.

After viewing the pictures with the petition, Council Vice President Margot Harris said it looks like it's in "pretty deplorable shape." The resident told the Council there are no basketball hoops and no nets, the grass needs reseeding and the walkway to the court has tripping hazards and needs to be repaved because children walk, ride their bicycles and run through there. "The park was never renovated after Sandy. There is debris, it needs a whole cleanup," said the resident, who asked that the work be done as soon as possible.

A Southfield Road resident added trees and bushes in the park become very overgrown during the summer and there is chipped paint on park apparatus. "We're going to look into this. I know we put in a new pickleball court there so we've made some improvements there," said Township Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**.

A visit to the park Saturday morning found a few water bottles on the ground and some dog feces, but otherwise a fairly well maintained park with two playgrounds, a tennis court without a net, and no basketball hoops or nets. A married couple who have lived in the neighborhood for 40 years brought their grandchild to the park Saturday. The wife said the court has very poor drainage and when it rains, the water ponds on the court for days. "They did repave it, but you can see there is no net. I think it would be better with a net," said the woman, adding there used to be basketball hoops on the court. Her recommendation for park improvements include moving some of the benches into the shade, because they get very hot in the summer. She also said some dead trees in the park have been removed and new mulch was installed around the playground equipment. She said the park is well maintained, with the grass cut and generally people clean up after using the park.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

The couple said if basketball hoops were installed, maybe more of the older kids would use the park and the lines for the tennis court could be redrawn. "My kids came where when they were little and played every day and when (her daughter) was older she worked at the summer program in the park," she said. "It's a nice park. They put the picnic tables up and that was good too. We've been to a lot of the parks, and this is one of the nicer ones." The wife said the park was renovated several years ago, sometime after 2012.

Councilman Joseph Coyle said he believes the park is on the town's list for a full renovation this year and Councilman Ajay Patil said the condition of the park was brought to the mayor's attention during the spring and he knows renovation work is planned.

Council President John Poyner said the council has passed resolutions related to playground surface and playground equipment at the park and possibly fencing.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/06/30/heres-how-much-the-price-of-edison-turf-field-project-went-up/70362318007/>
June 30, 2023

Here's how much the price of Edison turf field project went up

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON - The cost of the synthetic turf field project at Papaiani Park has gone up. The Township Council on Wednesday authorized a change order for Picerno Giordano Construction to relocate the bleachers and fencing, as well as concrete and paver removal work at a cost of \$96,085. The resolution indicates funds are available in a township account.

In anticipation of the sports building construction, the current placement of the bleachers needed to be moved further from the location of the building for safety reasons, according to Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**. "It's a safer environment for all the spectators coming in," **Alves-Viveiros** said Monday. She explained that with any construction project, once you break ground and review all the aspects of the project there may be some changes and in this case, it was the bleachers that needed to be moved for safety reasons. The bleachers are located where the groundbreaking for the sports center building will occur and there will be construction debris in that area. **Alves-Viveiros** said an addendum will be issued to the sports building project to remove plans to demolish the bleachers, since that work has already been done under the turf field contract. She said the change may offset some costs related to the sports building.

Council President John Poyner said the initial scope of work on the turf field did not include the moving of the bleachers in the turf field part of the construction work, which is currently going on. But engineering officials determined that in reviewing the timelines of the contractor, it made sense to have that work done now instead of having the sports building contractor remove the bleachers during part of the sports season. He said this also allows for the opportunity of new bleachers to be installed on the home team side of the field, which is the side where the building will be constructed. He said the recommendation was to keep the bleachers on the home team side and move them to the away team side of the field and have a new set of bleachers installed on the home team side. He said the sports building contract had called for the existing bleachers to be deconstructed, put to the side and then reconstructed in their existing location.

Poyner added that once the sports team season is underway, and if construction was still underway on the second story of the sports building and the home team side bleachers were already back in place, that would create a safety concern. Councilman Ajay Patil on Monday said he supports the project but indicated things could have been planned better. Councilman Richard Brescher on Monday asked to see the original architectural drawings and renderings as well as engineering plans and new drawings because he had a lot of unanswered questions.

In March the council awarded a \$4.2 million contract to Picerno Giordano Construction LLC of Kenilworth for the artificial turf football and baseball fields at Papaiani Park for youth athletes. The football field is for the Edison Jets, a youth football program, on the opposite side of Lake

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Papaianni. Field improvements also will allow for soccer and lacrosse on the football field and soccer on the baseball field outfield. The project was bid twice and had four respondents each time. The first one had low bid of \$4.3 million and a high bid of \$6 million. The township project also includes lighting, curbing and drainage improvements, in addition to the field work. Funding will come from various township engineering projects, engineering improvements and recreational department accounts.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/05/26/edison-comcast-xfinity-optimum-cable-tv-internet/70252378007/>

June 5, 2023

When will Comcast Xfinity internet and TV come to Edison?

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The township is moving forward with plans for municipal broadband by authorizing competitive bids for a consulting service to create a business plan, more than a year after several council members campaigned on the issue, and months after a study on the issue was completed. The Township Council on Wednesday approved a resolution for the bids. Councilman Richard Brescher, who had questions about the success rate of broadband in other communities as well as the maintenance, abstained from voting and Councilwoman Joyce Ship-Freeman, who wanted to table the issue until the council had more information, voted no.

The idea of high-speed municipal broadband in Edison has grown from the quest for faster, reliable and more affordable internet service in town, where Optimum has been the major provider. Comcast will now be constructing its own fiber network in town, and Brescher said internet service has improved for residents who have Optimum's newer fiber optic cable system. Councilman Nishith Patel, who was one of the most vocal advocates for broadband this week, said he thinks of it as a utility. "I think we need to own these lines. We need more competition. The majority of people are not happy with what they have," said Patel who estimates the town could be looking at millions of dollars in surplus in 10 years with broadband. "I think this is a great investment for the long term and for the future," Patel also believes the town would be eligible for grants and other funding from the state.

Council members this week had two lengthy discussions about broadband. On Monday, much of the discussion was centered on why a broadband study was completed in October but the results were released to the Council just in the last week, a decision by the administration that left Councilman Ajay Patil said he, too, expected the release of the results a while back and since the township started looking at broadband, the technology has evolved, and the town will have to determine if it is a viable project for the long term.

Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** said at Mayor Sam Joshi's administration's direction, the township is on to the next steps of creating a business plan, which is why a request for proposals is out for the broadband and the 41-page study report was released.

Council President John Poyner said the business plan would look at the strengths and weaknesses of municipal broadband and determine market competition. He said the consultant would analyze the best approach for Edison. "I do believe municipal broadband is the way for the township to go. We have increases in technology and advancements in technology that are going to require additional bandwidth, not just from the sense of the capacity of upload and download speeds, but eventually we're going to have to look at our electrical infrastructure because the more computing that is done, the more energy that is used," Poyner said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Ship-Freeman questioned if the township is truly serious about municipal broadband because the issue only seems to come out at election time. "We've got to do better than what we are doing," she said. "Don't bring it out every time there is an election and tease people like we're getting something that we're not getting."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/05/24/edison-township-council/70247238007/>

May 24, 2023

'You have duped this council': Edison fireworks after corruption charge in \$1M contract

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON - An unsuccessful GOP mayoral candidate has called for an investigation after the Township Council awarded a nearly \$1 million no-bid contract to an engineering firm that had recently hired the township business administrator's husband, and the council was not notified of the connection before the vote. While the business administrator said she notified others in the administration that her husband was hired by the engineering company that got the contract, it's unclear if that notification was made before or after the contract was approved.

At Monday's Township Council agenda session, Keith Hahn, a retired township police officer who has twice run unsuccessfully as mayor, said the governing body last month awarded the contract to T&M Associates for the rehabilitation of the Westside Sanitary Pumping Station. The resolution states that before entering into a contract, T&M Associates will have completed and submitted a Business Entity Disclosure Certification which certifies that they have not made any reportable contributions to a political or candidate committee in Edison in the previous year, and that the contract will prohibit T&M Associates from making any reportable contributions through the term of the one-year contract. Hahn said the \$974,200 contract seems excessively high for the engineering work especially since only a few years ago the township was building pump stations for \$500,000 to \$1 million. He added that T&M Associates in the past has received smaller contracts, not \$1 million contracts. Hahn said he's also learned that Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros'** husband recently got a job with T&M Associates. He said he considered that highly inappropriate and questioned if there would be an investigation into the apparent conflict of interest.

Alves-Viveiros husband works as an inspector for T&M Associates. "I did disclose that to the administration, the township attorney as well as human resources, so that is disclosed," **Alves-Viveiros** said. Hahn also questioned whether that disclosure was before or after the contract was awarded. **Alves-Viveiros** responded by saying T&M Associates had done work in Edison before her husband's recent employment.

Township Attorney David Minchello said the business administrator's husband's employment with T&M Associates was properly disclosed to the administration and **Alves-Viveiros** recused herself from any contracts involving that engineering firm. "As determined by the Township Attorney, Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** properly followed all legal and ethical procedures related to this matter. Not only did she disclose her husband's employment appropriately, she also recused herself from all dealings with T&M Associates going forward," the township said in a statement Tuesday. "It should be noted that T&M Associates has been one of the contracted engineering firms for the township for decades dating back to the 1990s, well before this development. Additionally, **Mrs. Alves-Viveiros'** husband is not a partner, executive

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

or a decision maker at the firm and serves only as an inspector. Township officials have mandated that Mr. Viveiros will not perform any services related to township projects under any circumstances," the township's statement said. At the meeting Minchello and Hahn exchanged words about the cost of past contracts and Hahn said while the attorney may not be aware of some of the past contracts, council members should know.

"This is a farce, if I'm not even allowed to respond," Minchello said. "We're not going to make a mockery of this council," said Council President John Poyner, who later called for a five- minute recess to restore decorum. "That bid was a mockery to this council," Councilman Richard Brescher responded, indicating Poyner had been aware of the connection between the administrator's husband and the engineering firm. "We were not made aware. You voted for it and I think you knew about the no-bid contract and you knew about the employment and you didn't tell the rest of the council. You, my friend, are in the same boat as the administration. You have duped this council, sir," Brescher said. Hahn said if the administration hires the vendors for the no-bid contract and the council approves the expenditure, the council should have been aware of the conflict.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/05/01/edison-township-nj-school-crossing-guards/70151890007/>

May 1, 2023

Edison plans to outsource school crossing guards. Here's why

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The township is looking to privatize the school crossing guard service because of longtime staffing issues. The Township Council has approved putting out bids for a private company to provide crossing guards. Part of the bid requirement will be current crossing guards get first preference for jobs, especially since some crossing guards have performed their crosswalk duties for a long time. According to Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**, the township's crossing guard staffing issues has resulted in police officers covering those assignments at a significant cost to the township.

Councilman Richard Brescher agreed police officers should not be serving as crossing guards but questioned how a company is able to find and hire crossing guards at a competitive wage, yet the township is unable to get crossing guards. "That tells me we're not managing properly because we should be able to get crossing guards, keep them, and maintain them. When government can't function within itself and has to subcontract out itself, I think there needs to be a change in government," Brescher said. "I don't feel positive about outsourcing. I'm not a big fan of outsourcing our public work that I feel should be done in-house." He added if the township is not able to get enough crossing guards, it's probably an issue of pay or benefits. "But some company has found employees that are willing to get out of bed for that amount of money, and what I'm saying to the administration is find those people," Brescher said.

The councilman said he's concerned that eventually every township function will be outsourced and all that will be left is a township administration. Edison currently has 40 crossing guards with 53 posts. There is one unfilled post and 12 guards performing a double post, according to township officials. Crossing guards receive \$19 an hour for three hours a day, when school is in session, township officials said. Edison has two high schools, four middle schools, one intermediate school, 10 elementary schools and a preschool program. **Alves-Viveiros** said there are companies that have the number of people who can provide the service.

Council President John Poyner said crossing guard positions are not full-time, or even full-year jobs, so outsourcing may make sense for the township. Councilwoman Joyce Ship-Freeman said crossing guard positions have been an issue for the past few years and she's glad some action is being taken. She does want to see any crossing guard posts uncovered for the children's safety. "This is the direction we are forced to go into," said Ship-Freeman who noted crossing guards only get a few hours of work, sometimes in very harsh weather, and there have been some recent retirements. **Alves-Viveiros** said the cost benefit of outsourcing would be based on benefits the township pays as well as administrative costs including the cost of coverage provided by police officers. "We'd be talking a huge difference just on the surface," she said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2023/01/27/edison-senior-center-slated-to-reopen-next-week/69843771007/>

January 27, 2023

Edison senior center set to reopen next week

By Suzanne Russell

The senior center will be open by Tuesday, Nick Bond, township spokesman, said he was informed. Bond's announcement on Thursday came less than 24 hours after a Township Council meeting in which no date for the reopening was stated.

Township officials previously had indicated the Woodbridge Avenue building work would be finished in mid or late January, but during Wednesday's City Council meeting Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** said the senior center, where work is nearing completion, will be reopened but didn't specify when. "We are going to be cleaning up and and starting up programming so for those that attend the senior center, including the clubs if you could just hold on and wait to get the word from us with regards to the actual schedule we will provide you with that. We want to get it up and running. It will be opened but we just want to set up our programming," **Alves-Viveiros** said.

"I don't really understand that," said the president of one of the senior citizens clubs that uses the facility who had expected the center to open on Monday. She hoped to receive a telephone call announcing the reopening date so she could inform her club members, some of whom walk to the center. She said each club president plans to call their members to let them know when the center will reopen. **Alves-Viveiros** said the town will get in touch through the senior coordinator.

The senior center at 2963 Woodbridge Ave. was closed for all in-person activities on July 29 after a bathroom renovation project revealed that the connection to the fire suppression system had deteriorated to the point that it needed to be replaced. The building is Edison's only senior center. During the center's closure, the township has used other buildings, including the Clara Barton First Aid Squad on Amboy Avenue, to host senior citizen programs and events. A fire department inspection also found issues with emergency lights that were not working, problems with exit signs, missing components on the fire alarm panel and the sprinkler system turned off.

In August 2022, council members awarded a \$115,000 emergency contract to Allied Fire and Safety in Neptune to move the project along, but initially there were issues with the availability of supplies. Last month council members approved two resolutions related to the bathroom work at the senior center and reported work on the suppression system was nearly completed. One resolution was a change order with Goksu Construction in Sparta for restroom renovations, including a valve replacement and additional dumpster in the amount of \$14,517.16 for a total amended contract amount of \$213,467.16. The other was a \$20,500 change order with Allied Fire and Safety for dry valve assembly at a cost of \$10,500 and \$10,000 to perform a water flow test and to provide an installation plan with hydraulic calculations.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2022/10/31/edison-nj-dpw-garage-parks-rec/69596857007/>

October 31, 2022

Edison officials state long-term goal for DPW

By Suzanne Russell

EDISON – The township is taking an expensive, but necessary, step toward making improvements at the Department of Public Works garage on Truman Drive, aimed at consolidation while setting the stage for a future major overhaul at another township DPW garage. Township Council members last week unanimously approved a resolution awarding a state contract for a new floor at the DPW garage at 101 Truman Dr. at a cost of \$549,239.63. Township Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** said the cost is lower than the engineer expected, and the public works director said the purchase was made through a co-op so it is already pre-bid for the service.

Council President Joe Coyle, who serves on the DPW committee, said the floor on the Truman garage, which formerly stored tanks, has settled over the years creating a slope and safety issues. "It's like jacking a car up on a hill," he said. Creating a level floor will allow for more indoor repair of vehicles. Coyle said the goal is have all the department's vehicles undergo repairs and maintenance at one location, the Truman garage, where all the parts and supplies, like tires, also will be stored. Training also is expected to be housed at the Truman garage site. The new floor also will allow more vehicles to be brought into the garage at one time. "Township motor vehicle maintenance and repair is a huge responsibility. We need to get these trucks in and out and back on the road," Coyle said, adding the township does a lot of its own repairs.

The Edison DPW covers 35 square miles and 250 miles of roads, he said, adding the township already has the trucks and manpower ready to tackle any upcoming snowfalls. "People care about their streets being plowed, their streets being paved, and their garbage picked up," Coyle said. The floor is expected to take about five weeks of work, including curing the concrete.

The council also approved resolutions to purchase a new wheel alignment machine at a cost of \$30,746.20; purchase a new scissor lift for \$35,010.01; purchase two new and unused vehicle post lifts for \$100,788.72; and a contract for welding of the trench drain risers for \$21,624.75. Councilman John Poyner said the improvements are necessary to get through the proper level of efficiency in the department and the right improvements to make going forward.

A concept plan is being developed by the mayor and his administration for the DPW garage at 745 New Durham Road, which is currently used for some indoor, but mostly outdoor, storage, Coyle said. The township also has a parks and recreation garage off Nevsky Street. "The long-term goal is to have all of our vehicles out of the elements underneath an overhang or inside a garage during the months when the weather is challenging," Coyle said.

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In January 2015, a four-alarm fire leveled the DPW maintenance garage on New Durham Road, destroying 11 salt spreaders with attached snowplows, three street sweepers, three repaving vehicles, a road maintenance truck and a fire engine that was awaiting repairs. The damage was estimated at about \$4 million.

Coyle said the end goal for the township is to provide every opportunity and services to residents in an efficient manner. By working on the Truman garage first, it positions the township to develop plans for the future restructuring of the Durham garage, he said. "We're shuffling our manpower and our vehicles and our services into one area so we can look at Durham as a blank canvas," Coyle said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TAPinto Edison (NJ)
March 10, 2022

Mayor appoints new business administrator

Author: *Tapinto Staff Edison*

Mayor Sam Joshi appointed **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** as Edison's next Business Administrator. **Alves-Viveiros** most recently served as the Business Administrator in Englewood and prior to that was the Business Administrator and Assistant Business Administrator in Maplewood. She served in municipal administrations in Summit and Bernards Township as well. She holds a B.A. in Public Administration and a Masters in Public Administration from Seton Hall University. She will begin her tenure in Edison on April 4, 2022.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros**

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Record (NJ)
December 2, 2021

Two more suits filed against Englewood police department

Author: *Katie Sobko*

Two city officers have filed lawsuits alleging pervasive racial discrimination in a police department that has been fraught with tension for years. Sgt. Lester Martin Jr. and Sgt. Zellvon Lucas filed individual suits in Superior Court in Bergen County against the city and its Police Department. Martin also named City Manager **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**, Director of Human Resources Daria Trumpet and Lt. Fred Pulice in his suit. Both complaints say the city and its police force "have long histories of conflict based upon a person's race, including claims, resulting lawsuits, and out-of-court settlements, arising from allegations involving unlawful racial discrimination (against employees and citizens)."

Sgt. Lester Martin's lawsuit

Martin was hired by the department in 2002. He was promoted to sergeant in 2016 and he registered to take the lieutenant's exam in February 2018. However, the test was pushed back to April of that year. He alleges that the change was made so that fellow Officer Gregory Martin would be eligible after having been temporarily barred from taking promotional exams for committing employment misconduct.

Martin, no relation to Gregory Martin, alleges the shift was "racially motivated" and done to hamper his efforts in securing the promotion. His complaint also says he "personally observed defendant Pulice sleeping on the job and became a witness of that incident in the Department's internal affairs investigation" in October 2018. But the department didn't take the misconduct seriously and the investigation was "compromised and otherwise lacked integrity," Martin claims. After learning that Pulice knew the particulars of the investigation, Martin reached out to the chief and deputy chief, pointing out that that was illegal, the suit says. Retaliation followed, Martin alleges, including a grievance filed against him that resulted in his removal from the patrol overtime list.

Martin claims he was not the only target. He alleges that after Pulice was suspended, he "mounted a horrific, racially motivated campaign" against then-Chief Lawrence Suffern and then-Deputy Chief Gregory Halsted, both persons of color, and "other persons of color who are department members." Pulice pursued a vote of no confidence against their leadership, was openly hostile to employees who are persons of color and forced people of color out of the union, Martin claims, and the city and the department have tolerated it. He alleges that complaints he brought up to **Alves-Viveiros** and Trumpet were not investigated appropriately.

Martin also alleges that the department failed to properly clean up black mold, and even opted to "ignore toxic mold in areas of the building where people of color were assigned to work, while cleaning and remediating the toxic mold in other areas where Caucasians were assigned to work." The mold remains, he said. Martin says Gregory Martin was unlawfully promoted to

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lieutenant in June of this year and officials "intentionally disregarded Gregory Martin's personnel jacket to promote him in a racially motivated manner despite substantial information indicating that Gregory Martin was not as qualified." Lester Martin's attorney, Christopher Deininger, had no comment.

Sgt. Zellvon Lucas' lawsuit

Lucas was hired in June 2001 by the Fire Department and transferred to the Police Department the following year. She was promoted to sergeant in 2018. She alleges that because she has reported fellow officers for infractions, she has been retaliated against, overlooked for promotions and discriminated against based on her race and gender. She was also forced to work in an office full of black mold despite having "known respiratory conditions," she alleges.

Lucas claims that in February 2019 she reached out to her supervisor regarding air quality in her office, saying the "office itself was infested with mold, the carpets in the office were overridden with mold and there was rat feces all throughout the office," but that no substantive action was taken. Instead, Lucas paid out of pocket for some repairs and an air purifier.

A test taken in summer came back positive for black mold and while remediation has been done, she says, "air sample tests still show elevated levels of black mold in the records area," where Lucas worked. After the vote of no confidence was taken against the chief and deputy chief, Lucas alleges that there was an increase in "verbal attacks on African American PBA members." Lucas is Black. After she and seven other officers signed a letter in support of the chief and deputy chief, they were suspended from the union and lost benefits as a result.

When Halstead retired as deputy chief, Lucas was recommended for the role, she says. Instead the process was changed. The table of organization was updated to allow for three candidates to vie for the position instead of using the recommendation of the chief. Several promotions were made in June 2021, all to white officers. Lucas also says in her complaint that nepotism was prevalent in the department. Representation for the city and for Lucas did not respond to requests for comment.

Other bias suits in Englewood

Other lawsuits have been filed in recent years against the city citing racial discrimination from people of all backgrounds. In August, Pulice sued the city alleging that he was discriminated against and passed over for a promotion due to his age and for speaking out against what he calls unlawful practices. Two lawsuits filed last summer accused the department of threatening residents with false arrests and displaying racial bias when promoting officers.

In another suit, a Hispanic police lieutenant says he was passed over for promotion because the department prefers to advance Black officers. In addition, discrimination suits have been filed related to the city's Fire Department and Public Works Department. In September 2020, Public Works employee Gaby Nelson alleged discrimination and retaliation on the basis of national origin, as well as a hostile work environment. According to the complaint, Nelson's supervisor Raymond Romney asked her, "What did President Trump call your country?" referring, she said,

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to comments made by Trump in 2018, when he referred to Haiti and African nations as "s-hole countries."

A prospective city firefighter alleged racial discrimination in a lawsuit over a withdrawn job offer in April 2019. According to the suit, Charles Barnhart was offered the job but received a letter from then-City Manager Edward Hynes days later saying his offer had been contingent on the budget and was being rescinded. Meanwhile, other individuals who were offered employment at or about the same time had been hired, the complaint said. Barnhart said the Fire Department was made up predominantly of white firefighters from out of town. About a third of Englewood's 28,400 residents are non-Hispanic whites, according to census figures.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches Sonia Alves-Viveiros

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.inglewoodnjrotary.org/speakers/5b586b1b-547c-45e9-9755-29936487b739>
Feb 16, 2021

Englewood's New City Manager



Sonia Alves-Viveiros

Englewood's New City Manager

Ms. Alves-Viveiros brings extensive background and experience to Englewood. Since 2018, she has served as the Township Administrator for Maplewood, New Jersey, where she was responsible for an approximately \$47 million dollar budget and the supervision of 225 full time and 179 part time employees. Before that, she served as the Assistant and Acting Township Administrator of Maplewood and served in administrative capacities in the City of Summit and Bernards Township.

She graduated from Seton Hall University with her Bachelor's Degree, and earned a Master of Public Administration from Seton Hall University. She is a certified Qualified Purchase Agent (QPA) and is a member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the New Jersey Municipal Management Association (NJMMA), and Governmental Purchasing Officers Association of NJ (GPOANJ).

In her new position, **Ms. Alves-Viveiros** oversees the operations of 12 municipal departments and divisions and supervises 262 full time, 47 part-time employees plus seasonal employees. The City's 2020 general operating budget is \$68.3 million and its 2020 Capital Budget is \$ 7.3 million.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.nj.com/bergen/2020/12/bergen-county-prosecutor-taking-over-nj-police-departments-internal-affairs-unit.html>

Dec. 16, 2020

Bergen County Prosecutor taking over N.J. police department's internal affairs unit

By Rodrigo Torrejon | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

The Bergen County Prosecutor's Office is taking over Englewood Police Department's internal affairs unit for at least the next six months, citing a months-long investigation into the unit. Starting this week, the Prosecutor's Office will enter into a monitoring agreement with the Englewood Police department to take complete control over the department's internal affairs unit, Bergen County Prosecutor Mark Musella said in a statement. The agreement will temporarily override Police Chief Larry Suffern's authority over the unit for at least six months, with the potential to extend the time period for longer, according to the agreement. The agreement will install a full-time monitor who will be able to review and audit every aspect of the internal affairs unit, dating as far back as necessary, according to the agreement. The monitor will be granted complete access to any books, documents, records and personnel they need, according to the agreement. The monitor will also be able to review and audit other parts of the police department if they deem it necessary, according to the agreement.

The agreement comes after the Prosecutor's Office conducted a six-month long investigation into the Englewood Police's internal affairs unit, the statement said. After the investigation, the office provided City Manager **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** with their findings. The Prosecutor's Office statement and Englewood administration did not provide those findings or the reasons for the agreement. **Alves-Viveiros**, who signed the agreement along with Musella, declined to comment on the agreement, referring questions to the Prosecutor's Office. Police Chief Suffern did not immediately return calls requesting comment.

Englewood Mayor Michael Wildes alluded to conflict within the Englewood Police department but stopped short of explaining what the Prosecutor's Office investigation found and the specific reasons why the agreement was forged to install a monitor. "I had the privilege of being at the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office last week, where he announced this," said Wildes. "He has a stellar reputation and as in the past has stepped into other departments in similar fashion. It's not a secret that our department is fractured. And I welcome his team and know that they will - together with our department -establish our best practices."

The police department has been beset by in-fighting among police officers who support Suffern and those who don't, as reported by NorthJersey.com. In April, a majority of 67 members of the PBA on the police department voted "no confidence" in Suffern, NorthJersey reported. Later, eight of the officers who did not vote "no confidence" sent a letter in support of Suffern and were ultimately suspended from their union, NorthJersey.com reported. In response, the eight officers chose to create their own rival union. And last month, the local chapters of the PBA and the Superior Officers Association sued Suffern, claiming he got rid of extra-duty shifts as retaliation, NorthJersey reported.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://villagegreennj.com/towns/maplewood/maplewood-township-administrator-sonia-Alves-Viveiros-leaving-for-new-job-in-englewood/>
October 20, 2020

Maplewood Township Administrator Sonia Alves-Viveiros Leaving for New Job in Englewood

Maplewood Township Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** will be leaving for a new job as City Manager of Englewood, NJ. **Alves-Viveiros** is expected to continue working in Maplewood through late November before embarking on her new job. The news was announced October 20 at the Maplewood Township Committee meeting.

Alves-Viveiros, who graduated in 2010 from Seton Hall University, interned in Millburn before working in administration in both Summit and Bernards Township. She was hired as Maplewood Assistant Township Administrator in September 2016, and was selected from a pool of six candidates as Township Administrator in 2018, after the retirement of Joseph Manning. This story will be updated.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://villagegreennj.com/towns/maplewood/maplewood-got-hammered-in-tropical-storm-isaias-with-downed-wires-trees-throughout-town/>

August 4, 2020

Maplewood ‘Got Hammered’ in Tropical Storm Isaias with Downed Wires, Trees Throughout Town

By Colleen Falconer

Tropical storm Isaias barreled through New Jersey on Tuesday, leaving numerous trees and wires down in Maplewood and some residents without power.

Township Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** reported on the damage at Tuesday night’s remote Township Committee Meeting. The Department of Public Works and the Fire Department are coordinating the removal of trees and wires, which has already begun. **Viveiros** said “PSE&G is here in town at the moment” with an MPD sergeant.

Residents with downed wires should report them to mpddesk@twp.maplewood.nj.us , according to Glenn Michalowski, Assistant Township Administrator.

Committee member Greg Lembrich asked how to best contact PSE&G, whose website has been down several times in the last few hours. **Viveiros** recommended emailing Township Engineer Paul Kittner at pkittner@twp.maplewood.us, as Kittner has direct contact with the regional PSE&G representative. Residents can also text 47734 to directly report to PSE&G if their account is already registered to PSE&G’s text update system.

The two kids’ camps out of the Woodland and Dehart Park both have generators and will be up and running as usual on Wednesday, said **Viveiros**. There will also be a “massive cleanup effort” tomorrow, according to Deputy Mayor Dean Dafis. “We’re gonna get to everyone as soon as we can,” said Dafis, who said there are over 70 locations in town with trees or wires down at this time.

Mayor Frank McGehee echoed Dafis’s statements, asking residents to be patient. “We got hammered,” he told the Committee and residents. The Departments of Public Works, fire, and police “were out everywhere, in all four corners of our township, securing streets, sidewalks, front lawns, whatever the case may be...It’s gonna take some time.” McGehee also informed listeners that the DPW will be coming around in the coming days to remove debris in all 6 zones.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros**

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://villagegreennj.com/health/maplewood-board-of-health-telling-the-story-of-the-virus/>
May 11, 2020

Maplewood Board of Health: ‘Telling the Story of the Virus’

At the May 5 Maplewood Township Committee virtual meeting, Board of Health Chair Dean Dafis and Township Health Officer Candice made a lengthy presentation in an effort to give the public a more holistic look at how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting their town of 25,000 residents. “This evening we thought it was time after seven weeks or so of data and social distancing ... to tell the story of the virus,” said Dafis. “How does this virus work and what does that look like nationally ... as well as right here in our community.”

“How is it that while infections may be slowing down deaths are rising,” said Dafis. “And what does the future look like? Science equals confidence. The data will inform the dates and how we open our society again,” he added. Flattening the curve isn’t the end, explained Dafis, who added, “The pandemic has a new shape: the plateau.”

“While social distancing does work ... the virus is still on the loose. The virus is not taking a summer break and we shouldn’t either. ... The number of affected persons could be even greater. ... Flattening the curve the first step, it’s not the end of the game and it’s not enough.” Davenport then made her way through a detailed presentation (scroll down or find it at twp.maplewood.nj.us) that cited the State of New Jersey’s COVID-19 porthole. Davenport explained that she and her team have been entering local data into that porthole, as are municipalities throughout the state.

Maplewood is embedded in Essex County which has the highest death toll of the 21 counties in the state, reported Davenport, who then gave numbers for Maplewood’s positive cases (263), recovered cases (120) and negative tests (more than 400) as of May 5. She noted that the work of the health officials doesn’t end with those numbers. There is ongoing contact tracing and support and follow up for positive diagnoses as well as all family members of those diagnosed with the disease (otherwise known as “probable cases”). Dafis noted that “half of hospitalizations are in the ICU” and that the disease is “still very strong and spreading.” He said that New Jersey is “really in the hot zone.”

Regarding the demographics of the disease, Davenport said that, as of May 5, “deaths don’t have an impact until [age] 30-49 then increases rapidly and exponentially as you get older.” She said that age is one of the major risk factors. “The other major risk factor are underlying conditions,” said Davenport. Those include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, immuno-depressed diseases and more. Davenport said that Maplewood was a “microcosm” of New Jersey, tracking closely with the state overall in terms of age and ethnicity impacted by the virus. “The ones who are getting sick are the essential workers,” said Davenport. In addition, “We are seeing cases in the elderly in long-term care facilities and nursing facilities throughout the state.” Dafis asked how Maplewood compared to similar municipalities. “We fall right in the middle,” said Davenport. “What makes us different is we have a working class population who are the workers in health

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

care and essential personnel. ... We have multi-family housing units. COVID-19 tells a story about density; that's how it can spread unfortunately." She noted, "We have an uninsured population" and that "24% of our residents are ALICE [Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed] -qualified. With this economic crisis that number has probably increased significantly. As [TC member] Vic [DeLuca] mentioned, 25% of our population is renters. 18% is foreign born."

Davenport noted that Maplewood's first COVID-19 case was diagnosed on March 14, with those numbers going up exponentially over time. She cited a peak around April 4 then another peak on April 17. "This mimics to a 'T' the state peaks." "March 21 is when we had the social distancing mandate," said Davenport. "Unfortunately it takes almost a month to make a difference." She said cautioned that, "as we lift any new restriction in a month we will see more cases if people don't continue to follow social distancing."

"The decrease shows what social distancing has done. without it, these numbers would have gone higher," said Davenport. "The peak would have been later and this decline would not have been possible." Besides social distancing, "wearing that face mask is key," she added. Davenport said to look out for symptoms including cough, fever, shortness of breath increasing to chest tightness, head aches, body aches, chills, sore throat, diarrhea and vomiting. pneumonia, and blood clots. "This disease keeps morphing and changing," she said. "Blood clots can lead to other issues such as strokes, heart attacks and embolisms." Later in the presentation, Davenport gave more details about contact tracing and recovery: "We take the time to follow every patient and all their household contacts. You are not a recovered case until everyone in your household has recovered."

Mayor Frank McGehee noted, "That 's 263 cases. That's 263 phones calls and all the followups. The amount of work coming out of your office is unbelievable ... a mountain of work." "We love what we do. We love our community," said Davenport.

Later in the regular meeting of the Township Committee, Township Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** noted that the Township is looking to reconfigure the way it does business in preparation for an eventual reopening of physical Township offices. That included everything from hand sanitizers to physical barriers in the offices ("we're working with the Historic Commission," said **Viveiros**). The Township is investing in an intercom system and will be doing once a month deep cleaning.

Viveiros stressed that the opening of buildings would not happen "until the governor issues orders." She also added, "I recommend enhancing and promoting an online platform of doing business and processing permits online. ... We were ahead of the game here. Our courts are a great example with processing of pleas and even virtual sessions now." "That would be the responsible way to open up."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

TAPinto Edison (NJ)
February 6, 2020

Maplewood recycling vendor narrowly re-awarded contract

Author: *Alia C. Covel*

After an impassioned promise from the vendor that this year will be different, a divided Township Committee has voted to continue using the current recycling collection provider. The move was unexpected, considering that the Township Committee meeting's agenda read "13. Report of receipt of bids — Recycling/SV 14. Hearing 15. Rejection of Recycling Bids."

The Maplewood Township Business Administrator, **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**, indeed advised the Committee that two bids for the contract had been received, and that she recommended dismissing both and putting the contract out to bid again. The low bidder, current provider F. Basso Jr. Rubbish Removal Inc., should be rejected for "bad past experience" and "lack of performance," said **Alves-Viveiros**; the vendor has had multiple complaints against them during their six years as a vendor and specifically in 2019 concerning how they handle pickups, not collecting recycling at all on pick up days, and lack of responsive customer service from the office. She said the higher bidder should be dismissed as well because the bid came in well above Maplewood's budget.

Multiple committee members acknowledged that Maplewood residents have complained about the company to them. Mayor Frank McGehee then allowed Dave Basso, the company's operations manager, to speak on the company's behalf. Basso started by acknowledging the past bad experiences, saying he was "embarrassed" to be in front of a township committee for the first time in his career, and that he "hoped to ease the concerns that you have." He delineated what the company has done to rectify the situation and ensure excellent service in the future. He said after receiving fines in September 2019 for missed collections in August, he evaluated "all existing policies and procedures" and underwent "a modernization of administrative procedure, equipment, and on my fleet." As for the staff who served Maplewood, "several employees were disciplined for these missed collections and some were even let go." The remaining staff was retrained in what was expected of them, Basso said.

Technology within the company was also stepped up. "GPS was added to all trucks in the fleet. This allows for real time monitoring of the trucks in the field." Their office can now track not only where an individual truck is currently, but what time pick up occurred on each block in town. "This will ensure the recycling is collected promptly and efficiently," he said. Since the implementation of F. Basso's new policies and the addition of the GPS system, he said, "in the last four weeks we had zero missed collections," which contrasted with 10 missed collections in the 18 weeks prior. He said his pricing, roughly one third less than the higher bidder, is due to the advantage of his company being close by in Irvington, and delivering the recyclables to Newark. Since the short distance saves time and fuel costs, "This allows me to pass along the savings to the township."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

For close to half an hour after Basso's plea, the committee members discussed the pros and cons of giving the company another chance. The time constraints of putting out a new request for bids when F. Basso's contract will expire at the end of February was another consideration.

Committee Member Vic DeLuca had made a motion to reject both bids, but rescinded it during the discussion. In the end, the vote to accept the bid and award the contract was passed three to two, with DeLuca and Mayor Frank McGehee voting against the motion. The new contract is set to begin March 1.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://villagegreennj.com/towns/maplewood/maplewood-terminates-department-of-public-works-director/>
January 12, 2020

UPDATED: Maplewood Terminates Department of Public Works Director

By Colleen Falconer and Carolyn Parisi

Updated January 12, 2020 with information on a lawsuit that Calvin Bell filed against the Township of Maplewood on January 3, 2020. A copy of the filing is attached below.

The Maplewood Township Committee terminated Director of the Department of Public Works Calvin Bell on January 7, 2020, after the town’s Business Administrator delivered a detailed account of Bell’s alleged insubordination, abuse of time, failure to report employee incidents and neglecting to pay outstanding invoices — in one case reportedly leading to the brief suspension of recycling services to the town — among other issues. Township administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** told the Township Committee that Bell’s insubordination and neglect of duties “are at a point where operations have been and are compromised” and she suggested his immediate termination.

Bell has been DPW director since November 2014, following the retirement of Eric Burbank. **Alves-Viveiros** said Bell had been notified of the hearing regarding his employment — called a Rice notice. Bell was present at the meeting, along with his attorney Eldridge Hawkins. Laying out a timeline that stretched back to June of 2018 when she assumed the role of township administrator, **Alves-Viveiros** told the TC she had noticed issues within the Department of Public Works, including failure to report incidents, hiring of staff, and morale within the department. She said she brought her concerns to Bell in the beginning of 2019, and throughout the year they worked to initiate culture studies and employee trainings including anti-bias training. But she said the incidents persisted; DPW employees failed to report to work, and around 20 grievances were filed for improper distribution of overtime.

In a November 2019 incident involving an altercation between two employees, one of whom was a supervisor, Bell did not report the incident to the proper chain of command, **Alves-Viveiros** said. The township then suspended Bell for five days. Hawkins told a Village Green reporter in November that it was the supervisor, not Bell, who should have been responsible for reporting the incident. “[The supervisor] didn’t get censured,” Bell’s attorney Eldridge Hawkins said then, adding, “I find it very disturbing that Maplewood is still going through (this) but that’s why we’re litigating.” Bell also reportedly failed to appear at various meetings that required DPW representation, which **Alves-Viveiros** said she brought to his attention throughout 2019.

In the most recent incident leading to her recommendation to terminate Bell, **Alves-Viveiros** said she was copied on an email dated January 3, 2020 to Bell from Tiffany Giordano of Giordano Recycling that stated the vendor “would no longer be accepting our recycling” effective immediately, because the township owed “approximately \$57,000, and were past due 90 days.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Alves-Viveiros said she immediately called the vendor to assure payment so that services were resumed. On January 7, she met with Bell and township CFO Joseph Kolodziej and asked Bell about the unpaid invoices. Bell reportedly said that he didn't know, with "no justification or explanation" despite the fact that the invoices were sent directly to him. Bell told her that "he did not recall" any communication regarding outstanding invoices. The Township Administrator noted two other incidents where Bell neglected to pay invoices, including to a landscaper and a vendor who provides fuel for the town jitneys — both of which she said Bell provided no explanation for.

Hawkins took to the podium with an impassioned defense of his client. He expressed grave concerns with information that **Alves-Viveiros** had presented at the meeting that he said she could not have known before sending notice of the hearing to Bell on January 3. "Clearly, she's talking about things that happened today," he said, suggesting the TC question **Alves-Viveiros** "because she didn't give specifics. She was very broad with what she said." At one point during Hawkins' speech, Township Committee member Nancy Adams interjected and admonished him for his repeated references to **Alves-Viveiros** as "young lady" and "lovely young lady."

"Her name is **Ms. Viveiros**," Adams said. "That's disrespectful, and works against her position in this township ... calling her a young lady over and over again." The attorney took the note, but continued with his critique. "Everything she's laid out is wrong. ... I couldn't quite say how my client was on suspension, and never got the communication — as your policy requires — to say 'final warning, the next time you could be terminated.'" He also expressed that he didn't "know how she would be able to get this matter brought before this board," following last week's reorganization meeting.

"You watch yourself," Hawkins told the committee. "'Cause you're going to take responsibility for **Ms. Viveiros**, and all of you are gonna go where she wants to go." As soon as Hawkins finished speaking, Township Committee member Greg Lembrich made a motion to vote on Bell's termination, effective immediately. All five members voted yes. The motion to advertise for a new candidate for the position was also decided on a unanimous vote.

Village Green reached out to the township's attorney, who declined to comment on the situation. *UPDATE: Bell filed a suit against the Township on Jan. 3 alleging "trumped up" allegations, racial discrimination and retaliation for filing a suit (scroll down to see the full filing). Township Committee member Greg Lembrich commented on Facebook: "The lawsuit was decidedly not a factor in this outcome. If anything, this decision was made despite the lawsuit. I cannot comment any further or address the specifics because this is a personnel matter, but I would refer the public to the statement/memo from **Ms. Viveiros**, which speaks for itself." **Viveiros** read the memo aloud at the Jan. 7 meeting, but Village Green has requested a copy of the memo and will append it here when it is received.*

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Sonia Alves-Viveiros

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://villagegreennj.com/towns/maplewood/2019-maplewood-state-of-the-township-address/>
January 1, 2020

2019 Maplewood State of the Township Address

By Frank McGehee, Mayor of Maplewood NJ

The following State of the Township address was delivered by newly sworn-in Maplewood Mayor Frank McGehee at the Township Committee's annual Reorganization Meeting on January 1, 2020:

STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP ADDRESS

Happy New Year Maplewood and Thank you again for attending today.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues on the Maplewood Township Committee for electing me unanimously as your Mayor. Over the last three years, we've collaborated and worked diligently to achieve results which will only enhance our community.

I also want to recognize all the staff or as I like to say the Maplewood Township Team. These individuals are the heartbeat of our town's operations. From Public Works to Fire to Recreation and Human Services to Engineering and Health, 225 full-time and 179 part-time employees who are dedicated to The Township of Maplewood. Please join me in recognizing the team that is here today.

I also want to recognize our Town Clerk Liz Fritzen who could not be with us today due to a broken wrist. Liz has been a pillar for our township for 40 years. I know that she wishes that she could be here and is likely watching at home. Liz, we are praying for your speedy and healthy recovery.

Our township administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** and her team have made significant progress with reorganizing multiple departments, empowering department heads, and negotiating collective bargaining agreements with our fire, public works, library, and other labor unions. These are critical initiatives that will have a direct impact on operations and budgeting for years to come. Thank you, Ms. **Viveiros**, for your leadership.

Roger Desiderio, our town attorney: Thank you for your 26 years of dedication to your township. Your counsel has been invaluable. And thank you for stepping in today on Liz's behalf.

Three years ago when I was elected into office on the Maplewood Township Committee, it was the same night that our current president was elected into office. With a new administration in the White House, there was a lot of uncertainty both nationally and around the world about what was to become of the state of our union. There was and continues to be so much at stakewomen's rights, immigration rights, climate change, LGBTQ+ rights, Black lives, criminal justice reform, equity in education, common sense gun laws and affordable healthcare. We are

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

living in extremely challenging times. But here's what I know for sure...Maplewood is resilient and as a community, we continue to show the nation and the world who we are.

So who are we?

Maplewood is a welcoming community. In my first month in office, my colleagues and I on the Maplewood Township Committee passed Resolution 3-17 to express Maplewood's commitment to equal, respectful and dignified treatment of all people regardless of their immigration status. Since then, we have established "rainbow crosswalks." We have also raised the pride, transgender and Haitian flags. But this is not about what we on the Township Committee are doing, it's about what YOU are doing! Folks like Maplewood resident Alan Stephenson, who upon learning about the Women's March in Washington DC in January 2017, sprang into action and reserved two buses to transport fellow neighbors and friends from our community to and from Washington DC so that they could participate. Or what about the time that Natalie and Javier Farfan hosted a dinner at their home for Syrian refugees? We will continue to collaborate with local organizations dedicated to celebrate our differences and provide venues for open dialogue.

So who are we?

Maplewood is a community that is committed to sustainability. We continue to be recognized by Sustainable Jersey as one of the leading municipalities in the state and Maplewood was awarded again with Silver Certification. Only 53 out of 565 municipalities have earned this recognition, that puts Maplewood in the top 9% in the state. In 2019 we banned single use plastic bags. We joined 5 other municipalities to form the Sustainable Essex Alliance and launched Community Energy Aggregation and although we have experienced a minor bump in the rollout, the program will provide cleaner and cheaper energy for months to come. We also installed an Electric Charging Station at The Woodland, and held our first Electric Vehicle Car Show at the Maplewood Pool parking lot. In 2020, we will look to enhance our commitment to rid our environment of other plastics and materials such as straws, stirrers, and containers that are harmful to our planet. We will move forward with an Energy Savings Improvement Program (ESIP) for Town Hall and explore other township buildings in the future. But when I think of sustainability and Maplewood, the person who immediately comes to mind is Tracey Woods. Tracey, a long-time resident, is the chair of the Maplewood Green Team. She also works for Sustainable Jersey. Tracey is committed to Maplewood and our environment. She has organized nearly every sustainability event in our town. From Green Day to Biketopia, she is the ultimate Maplewood ambassador and advocate for educating residents on reducing their environmental impact. She participates in marches and student led Climate Crisis teach ins acting with a sense of urgency. With her Husband Rich, she is raising two extraordinary children. Recently, Tracey and her sister Kelly, also a Maplewood resident and volunteer with MEND, lost their mom, Pamela, our prayers are with you and your family. Tracey, Thank you for making Maplewood strong on Sustainability.

So who are we?

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Maplewood is a thriving business community. In the last year alone, we've welcomed several new restaurants like Ani Ramen, Freetown Kitchen, Picketts and Luna Stella. I love hearing residents rave about new businesses on Springfield Avenue and in the Village like the General Store Cooperative, Maker + Muse and City Workshop. And we're just getting started. In 2020 we will continue to attract even more businesses with openings planned on Springfield Ave in locations that have been vacant for many years. Our town is blessed to have business owners who are committed not only to growing and enhancing their business, but also their community. Business owners like Julie and Thomas Pauly of the Able Baker. The Paulys have selflessly dedicated and contributed baked goods, money and an infinite amount of time to charitable events and causes. As my wife likes to say, the Able Baker is "one of the most woke bakeries around AND they make great coffee." And to Pete and Fifi Kikianis owners of the Park Wood Diner, thank you for always putting community first. Fred Shandler not only owns the thriving Arturo's in Maplewood Village but the equally amazing Bread Stand on Boyden Ave. Fred's Bread Stand has answered the call of investing in an area in our Maplewood community which has largely been ignored, but has great potential. Thank you, Fred, for your forward-thinking vision. Deborah Engel and Amy Howlett, founders of the General Store Cooperative, designed to enable local makers and indie businesses to collaborate and allow our residents to shop-local and invest in our community. Thank you Deborah and Amy for giving our local entrepreneurs an outlet where residents can interact and support their fellow neighbors.

So who are we?

Maplewood is a great place to live. Average median home list prices are up year-over-year and appreciation rates for our homes have been tracking above national average according to industry data and our town ranks in the top 30% nationwide. Also, the days that a home is on the market is down year-over-year. Year-to-date more than 480 homes have been sold over 7% of our residential housing stock. Still, we have not lost sight on ensuring that Maplewood remains home for our seniors and residents who span all socio economic demographics. And I look forward to working with my colleagues and with residents to identify viable affordable housing solutions. In the meantime, our Maplewood Housing Rehabilitation Program is available to assist eligible households with making repairs with \$20,000 in forgivable loans.

So who are we?

Maplewood demands commuter-friendly transportation. The Morris Essex and Gladstone NJ Transit lines must be reliable modes of transportation. Commuters should not need to have to take a train several hours earlier out of fear that their regular train will be canceled or delayed which causes a lot of stress particularly on our families who are balancing child care or caring for elderly parents. To mitigate this, we will continue to offer bus service to the city for our morning commuters. And we will continue to push NJ Transit to provide the customer experience that our residents and surrounding communities deserve!

So who are we?

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

We are a safe and healthy community. Through the first three quarters of 2019, major crimes in Maplewood are down or flat across all major categories. Assaults, motor vehicle thefts, burglaries are down 40%, 58% and 9% respectively and in 2019 robberies are flat from 2018 with a total of 10. And speaking of safety, let's not lose sight of the progress we've made when it comes to pedestrian safety. Our Traffic Bureau has written over 3,400 moving violations and 7,400 parking violations during that period. Thank you to our police department. Our Fire Department wears many hats as first responders from EMS to fire to conducting safety inspections. The department is well run from training to maintenance to execution. They are a family and consider the residents of Maplewood to be their extended family. Currently, with the help of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, we are negotiating with South Orange the consolidation of our two fire departments. This is an extremely complicated undertaking, where the focus is on creating an enhanced department serving our two towns. I want to thank our fire department for being constant professionals throughout this process, with unwavering dedication to the community. Our Board of Health promotes wellness in our community and The Municipal Alliance advocates for the mental, social and physical health of our youth and an environment that is free of the abuse of alcohol, vaping and other illicit drugs. In 2019, we held Drug Take Back Days to dispose of all expired or unused medication, we raised over \$2,700 for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and participated in the Out of the Darkness Walk. In 2020 we will continue to support CHS Midnight Madness and educate our youth about tobacco, vaping and mental health. Thank you to Bob Roe who retired just yesterday as our Health Officer and spent 47 years in public health. We look forward to the leadership of Candice Davenport as our new Health Officer. We are a township that embraces change and innovation which will bring Maplewood into the 21st century. Building a 21st Century Library is still a focus for our township. The state issued regulations regarding the \$125 million bond and we submitted feedback regarding the draft rules and are asking that the state consider gut reconstruction projects be funded as new construction and to raise the per foot project cost from \$350 to \$550 to reflect the true cost of site preparation, construction, project overhead, sustainability features, technological upgrades, furniture and equipment and other factors. We remain committed and Thank you to Sarah Lester and her team, The library Board, Library Foundation and the Friends of the Library for their leadership. The redevelopment of Irvington Avenue will commence and will include two phases. Phase 1 will include lighting upgrades, decorative streetscape furniture, sidewalk reconstruction with enhancements between Prospect Street and Hillcrest Road and a crosswalk at Coolidge Road. Phase 2 will also include lighting upgrades, streetscape, sidewalk reconstruction, trees, signage, crosswalks and intersection enhancements between Hillcrest Road and Florence Avenue. We are also moving forward with a redevelopment study. To the residents of the Borden Park neighborhood, we hear you and look forward to making progress in 2020. The Pavers in Maplewood Village are complete and now we begin the process of assessing the Maplewood Village Visioning Plan provided by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. The township looks forward to collaborating with stakeholders on the feasibility and a phased implementation. In June of 2019, we approved a bond to pay for our school district's \$157.4 million capital improvement and integration plan to build additional classroom space, address long-standing maintenance issues, and achieve integration across our community. We look forward to seeing the positive results of this

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

investment under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Ronald Taylor, Mr. Paul Roth, and the Board of Ed.

So who are we?

We are a town where our youth not only have a voice, they have a seat at the table. Since we appointed the Youth Advisory Committee in 2018, they have been busy doing the work for our community and young people. In 2020 look for the rollout of MAPSO safe rides. The 2020 equivalent of a designated driver initiative, MAPSO safe rides is a peer-to-peer volunteer and leadership program designed and led by youth for the purposes of preventing underage exposure to drugs and alcohol and other unsafe or dangerous situations unexpectedly and unwillingly at after school gatherings or other social settings in the community.

So who are we?

We are a town that wants your ideas. Earlier this year we invited residents, community groups and non profit organizations all based in Maplewood to submit ideas that provide a community benefit. The winning project selected was a neighborhood Wifi pilot to help close the digital divide.

So who are we?

We are a community who is not only passionate about the arts, it's in our DNA. For the second consecutive year, the Springfield Avenue Partnership Public Art Initiative has brought art to Springfield Avenue. Please visit Firehouse two on the corner of Springfield Ave and Boyden Ave to see for yourself.. And this past fall The Maplewood Arts Council unveiled public works of art in the North tunnel of our Maplewood Train Station. And not only is Maplewood a community where Broadway goes to sleep, it's where Broadway gives back. Our Broadway stars under the leadership of the Vanessa Pollock Music Initiative are actively working to raise money for the Achieve Foundation so that more students throughout Maplewood and South Orange can get access to music education. And I hope you will all come out for the second annual SOMA Rocks event at the Woodland on Saturday, January 11, where the proceeds will benefit music programs at Columbia High School. We are a township that will count and be counted. The 2020 Census is here. From now until the end of July, we will work diligently with the Essex County Census Staff and the SOMA Complete Count Committee to count every single person with an emphasis on children and hard to reach populations. We will distribute leaflets in English, Spanish and Creole and The Maplewood Library will promote Census employment positions and provide computers to allow residents to complete Census questionnaires online; A complete Census count helps Maplewood get more federal and state funding. Everyone counts in Maplewood so remind all your neighbors to BE counted.

So who are we?

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We are a township where hate has no home. Where we stand up not only for ourselves but for each other. We are a community that comes together in celebration and in unspeakable grief. We are a community that is willing to have the tough conversations. We are a township where we have appointed women and people of color in top leadership positions. We are a Township that is resilient with a shared vision and purpose heading into 2020, whether it's enhancing our infrastructure, reducing our carbon footprint, streamlining our operations to be more efficient or investing in our business districts all while ensuring that Maplewood is a safe community to live, work and play. And we're just getting started!

Thank you, God bless Maplewood and God bless the United States of America.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

TAPinto Edison (NJ)
July 15, 2019

Westfield looks at Maplewood leaf blower law

Author: *Matt Kadosh*

The leaves are long gone but the gas-powered blowers are still making noise. Jon Spitz, a Dorian Road resident, is lobbying the municipality to find a fix for loud gas-powered leaf blowers that he said contractors are using to blow grass clippings into the street. “This is a huge quality of life issue for 20 percent of the people who, like me, are over-the-top annoyed by it,” Spitz told the Town Council this week. “My wife, for instance, is not annoyed by it.” However, she is concerned about the pollution from the blowers, he said.

Town Attorney Tom Jardim said during a council workshop this week that the options for regulating such noise are limited. “Other than a complete ban on gas-powered equipment like this, it is very difficult to come up with a policy that actually works in some way that’s going to grant relief to the residents of Westfield,” Jardim said. “The committee is all ears to [hearing] what policy options are available,” he added.

On Thursday, Mayor Shelley Brindle said Spitz would be forwarding those suggestions to the town. “He is going to send us some proposed policy solutions on that for consideration,” Brindle said. “Once we review them, we’ll determine next steps, including the potential formation of a committee, if deemed necessary.” Westfield’s existing regulations may provide some relief. The town ordinance allows for up to 65 decibels of noise outdoors from 7 a.m. – 10 p.m. Some leaf blowers can exceed that level.

What have other municipalities done?

Westfield is not the first municipality to wrestle with the regulation of noisy leaf blowers. In 2017, Maplewood made headlines with a ban prohibiting the use of gas-powered blowers from May 15 – Sept. 30. While the seasonal ban on gas-powered leaf blowers was widely popular, even receiving an endorsement from the Star Ledger’s Editorial Board, the regulation landed Maplewood in federal court when the New Jersey Landscaper Contractors Association sued on behalf of nine landscapers in that township.

The lawsuit takes that township to task for targeting with its ordinance commercial entities using gas-powered leaf blowers. Court records show that the parties have been working toward a settlement but have yet to reach one. **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**, the business administrator in Maplewood, said that since the Township Committee approved the controversial regulation, her office has not received complaints about noise from leaf blowers. “I haven’t received any complaints about it. It’s been quiet. It has certainly been helpful in that sense,” **Alves-Viveiros** said. “Several people we know of work from home, and those are the people I would have heard from.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

In Westfield, Spitz admits a Maplewood-style blower ban is not the best option. “You don’t want have happen like what happened in Maplewood, where people were so ludicrous over the situation that they [nearly] came to blows,” he said. Like in Westfield, Summit is also looking at a potential ban on gas-powered leaf blowers, but city officials first want to see what happens in the Maplewood court case, said Amy Cairns, spokeswoman for the city. “Everyone acknowledges that not only do they emit harmful toxins into the environment, it’s bad for workers to use them all day — for their breathing for their hearing — but it’s also their livelihood,” Cairns said.

In Clark, the noise control regulations apply to gas-powered leaf blowers, but do not call out gas-powered blowers or commercial entities specifically. The law prohibits “the operation of any noise-creating blower or power fan or any internal-combustion engine, the operation of which causes noise due to the explosion of operation gases or fluids.” The regulation allows for an exception if the device is equipped with a muffler. Scotch Plains lumps the regulation of leaf blowers in with the use of other noisy lawn care equipment and reminds the public to limit the use of such equipment from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Taking it to the public

In 1996, Montclair Township let voters decide on a seasonal gas-powered leaf blower ban. The anti-blower voters won the referendum by a thin margin: 2,815 to 2,093, according to the Montclair Times. And 26 years later, gas-powered leaf blowers may only be used March 1 – June 30 in that township, under the regulation in force. Spitz, for his part, simply hopes to put a damper on the noise in his neighborhood. He told the council he wants to educate homeowners on the issue so they ask their landscapers to cut back on the blowing. “The noise is very stressful and it really changes the dynamic of the town,” Spitz added. “You can’t go for a 15 minute period in the morning where you don’t hear these in the Tamaques area.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://villagegreennj.com/towns/government/a-change-in-accounting-causes-pain-in-maplewood-2019-budget/>
March 31, 2019

Maplewood to Introduce 2019 Budget With 6.8% Tax Levy Increase

By Mary Mann

After years of passing municipal budgets at, below or near the 2% state-mandated cap, Maplewood Township will be introducing a proposed \$45.6M 2019 municipal budget on April 2 with a 6.8% tax levy increase. Why the change from recent years? According to Mayor Vic DeLuca, “The key drivers of this year’s increase are roughly \$450,000 in salary increases for all employees as per the employee contracts; an increase of \$1 million in long term debt repayment (which will save us money over the long term); and annual increases in our payments for employee health benefits and pension obligations.”

“To complicate matters,” continued the mayor, “we gave less surplus to carry over into 2019, generally because we have kept budgets and tax increases at a minimal the past few years. This practice, which in the past we did to keep tax increase low, has resulted in less surplus funds to carry over into 2019. Additionally, we are in agreement with the recommended (and more conservative) budgeting policies practices of the current CFO [Joseph Kolodziej]. This will help us stabilize Township finances and improve our bond ratings.”

At a preliminary budget hearing on March 20, Township Chief Financial Officer Joseph Kolodziej presented the TC with three scenarios, ranging from a projected tax levy increase of 3.2% to one of 13%. Kolodziej strenuously advised the TC to avoid the scenario that had the lowest tax impact due to his call for the Township to adopt ‘best practices’ in accounting and to bring Maplewood’s budget process in line with “most towns.” DeLuca stressed the need to find a balance between getting the Township on a path to best practices while being mindful of the pain the increase would place on the pocketbooks of residents. Ultimately, DeLuca and the TC members tasked Kolodziej with crafting a budget for introduction below a 7% tax levy increase. “We charged the Administrator and Chief Finance Officer with the task of reducing the average home 2019 tax increase to less than \$5 per week,” said DeLuca. “The budget we will introduce on Tuesday [April 2] uses these expense and revenue numbers and the tax increase will be less than \$5 per week on average.”

During a 2-1/2 hour budget hearing on March 20, DeLuca and the four other members of the Maplewood Township Committee — Deputy Mayor Frank McGehee, Nancy Adams, Greg Lembrich and Dean Dafis — grappled with the budget issues presented by Kolodziej and Township Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** and tried to make sense of the situation.

After spending the first hour of the meeting discussing how the town was accounting for projects that would be covered by grants and then running through a list of capital projects, the TC got down to talking about the overall 2019 budget about one hour into the meeting (see the 1:02 mark in the video below). DeLuca noted that the bond service was normally at \$4M in the

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

budget, but that this year, “it’s up to \$5M.” Kolodziej explained that that was because the Township “wanted to lock in good interest rates.” He noted that one bond would retire in 2020 and another in 2021, so the town would see “a dip” then, but was “struggling along now.” Elected officials and administrators discussed increases in health care (Kolodziej said the Township might look at a less expensive private health care plan for future), increased costs in recycling (Kolodziej noted that towns across the globe were dealing with changes in this market), and more than \$400K in contractual salary increases.

Kolodziej told the TC that, although some factors couldn’t be controlled by the town — such as the global recycling market or the way the state “plays” the pension obligation — other items could be, such as the Township’s handling of its fund balance. “Things didn’t get broken in a year, they can’t get fixed in a year, but we cannot continue on this path,” said Kolodziej, who urged the Township Committee “to right the ship” by replenishing its fund balance and not using most of it to keep taxes lower. Kolodziej explained that, in the Township’s cash management plan, there is a policy encouraging the use of no more than 50% of fund balance to close a budget gap. “We’ve been utilizing quite a bit more than over 50%,” said Kolodziej. He noted that bond rating agencies look at that number, and said that the practice of using most of the fund balance “has pretty much caught up to us.” Kolodziej said that the town should have been raising taxes higher in previous years.

DeLuca expressed frustration that “this is the one year that we hit a home run on increasing valuations. ... All the big projects have come online [Avalon Bay, 1701 Springfield Avenue].” The mayor added that it was “very disappointing to see these kind of tax increases.” Although Kolodziej darkly joked that he was “like the harbinger of death,” he said; “While we shouldn’t be putting together a structurally imbalanced budget, we have enough lights on the horizon that we can survive this.” He talked about the Township setting up a sewer authority in the future to move that cost out of the budget. DeLuca said that taxpayers would then just be “paying a higher sewer fee.” Lembrich called it “robbing Peter to pay Paul.” But Kolodziej said that it would be better for taxpayers because they can no longer deduct more than \$10K in property taxes and “with a sewer utility, [that’s a] fee you can control” by flushing the toilet less or taking shorter showers.

Meanwhile in the present, DeLuca instructed Kolodziej to come back with a budget under a 7% increase — an option that would put the Township on the road to best practices but that would be more palatable as it amounted to a \$5/week increase for the average household. “Given what the school district is doing [referring to a \$140M capital project that will need to be bonded], we need to be aware. What we do here may wind up impacting them there,” agreed Kolodziej. “I understand but I also don’t want to be fiscally irresponsible,” said Dafis. “I want to be on the path to recovery so we’re not having this conversation next year.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://villagegreennj.com/business/town-aiming-to-minimize-road-closures-for-maplewood-avenue-paving-in-village/>
November 8, 2018

Town Aiming to Minimize Road Closures for Maplewood Avenue Paving in Village

By Mary Mann

Maplewood Township is working to quell the fears of Maplewood Village merchants — and customers — after its contractor sent out a notice that had many thinking Maplewood Avenue would be closed all this coming week for milling and paving.

No so, reports the Township Engineer Paul Kittner, Township Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** and Township Committee member Dean Dafis.

Kittner corrected the record by issuing a notice to merchants (see below) that all milling of the roadway would take place overnight Sunday, November 11, through Monday morning, November 12, in order to minimize impact on businesses. Kittner also reported that Maplewood Avenue paving was scheduled for Wednesday, November 14, beginning at 9 a.m. — weather permitting. Kittner said that paving needed to take place during the day due to temperature requirements.

Township Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** told Village Green that typically the paving should be able to be completed in one day: “It typically takes one day and again pending inclement weather and if the equipment doesn’t break down.” However, Dafis cautioned that the paving could run to a second day. Nonetheless, two days of road closures sounds a lot better than an entire week. Kittner also stressed in his notice that all sidewalks and pathways would be open, as well as parking lots.

Throughout it all, Maplewood police officers will be on hand to aid in directing traffic. Officials encouraged local residents to continue to patronize Maplewood Village businesses as they are all open and ready to serve customers.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Essex News Daily (NJ)
September 24, 2018

TC discusses importance of clear taxpaying guidelines

Author: *Yael Katzwer*

At its Sept. 4 meeting, Maplewood Township Committee further discussed the town's reasons for no longer accepting partial property tax payments, a change in policy that came after South Orange voted in June to allow its tax collector, Aderonke Zaccheus, also to serve as Maplewood's tax collector. Payments may now only be made for each quarter in lump payments by Feb. 1, May 1, Aug. 1 and Nov. 1.

"People were making payments in between the quarters and what our new tax collector said that her professional opinion was, is that we should not be taking those payments because payments are due on those four quarterly dates and you cannot make partial payments toward those quarterly dates," DeLuca said at the meeting. "Whether or not we accept partial payments, we can, there's no prohibition," he added, explaining that Zaccheus does this to avoid confusion.

According to DeLuca and Maplewood Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**, the confusion came when people would pay, say, 50 percent of their taxes, then, when late on the other 50 percent, be charged interest in penalties on the full amount owed.

"I think the crux of the problem is, if the full amount is not paid on the due date, Nov. 1, or within whatever the grace period is, which is a 10-day grace period, I believe, statutorily, the person's going to be charged the full interest and penalty on the full amount, regardless of the partial payment they've made or not. So, if they owe \$3,000 and they pay \$2,000, and they owe \$1,000, on the due date they're going to pay interest in penalties on the \$3,000," township attorney Roger Desiderio said.

"And they come and argue that 'I've already paid \$2,000, so therefore, whatever you're charging me, should only be on the \$1,000' and we say, 'no, we have to charge you on the \$3,000. It gets to be an issue,' DeLuca said. "The state doesn't allow that partial payment to be in lieu of the full payment that was due on Nov. 1."

Deputy Mayor Frank McGehee questioned: "So a resident comes in and we reject their payment?" "We're not taking that, not unless that's the full amount," **Alves-Viveiros** said. McGehee asked if the township had been telling partial payers when accepting the partial payment that, interest-wise, they were still on the hook for the entirety of their property taxes, and Desiderio responded that the due date is listed on the tax bill with a notice that, if you are not paid by then, you will be charged interest on the amount.

"I don't think we're letting them know," McGehee said, suggesting that, if the town does go back to accepting partial payments, it should make that clear at the time of payment. "It's an extra document, but I think we need to over-communicate it until people understand this truth."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

But DeLuca pointed out that, in addition to the confusion accepting partial payments can cause, the practice also forces the department to do more bookkeeping and increases the cost of labor in the department.

Committeeman Dean Dafis expressed concern that partial payment may be the only viable method of payment for some residents. “I understand the state law, I understand the tax assessor’s position as well, but am I wrong in thinking that the folks who are making partial payments, even within the quarter, are some of our seniors who are waiting on that check to come in and do it when they can?” Dafis asked. **Alves-Viveiros** assured Dafis that the tax collector’s office will be proceeding on a case-by-case basis. “If there’s a situation where we could do the partial payment, we’ll do that,” **Alves-Viveiros** said. “She’s doing that now in South Orange, she’s not doing anything different than what she’s doing there.” But Desiderio argued against accepting partial payments at all. “If you start making exceptions to the rule, the exception can swallow the rule and someone can say, ‘you did it for me last time or you did it for my neighbor,’” Desiderio said.

DeLuca agreed, saying that he believes case-by-case acceptances of partial payments led to the more widespread practice in Maplewood. “We had a policy and then the policy was ignored and people started to pay, they were allowed to pay, and then more and more people started to pay,” DeLuca said. “The tax collector made a professional judgment now; if we don’t agree with that, we have the right as the governing body to overturn that.”

DeLuca added that he wants to know how many property owners were making partial payments so that he can properly gauge its impact. **Alves-Viveiros** told the News-Record via email that she did not have that figure. “This is not like anybody’s in jeopardy; people are just prepaying their taxes. And they can just put the money in the bank and then pay in November,” DeLuca said. “They’re using this as a bank.”

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Essex News Daily (NJ)
August 25, 2018

Maplewood no longer accepting partial property tax payments

Author: *Amanda Valentovic*

Maplewood is no longer accepting partial property tax payments, a change in policy that comes after South Orange voted in June to allow its tax collector, Aderonke Zaccheus, also serve as Maplewood's tax collector. Payments may now only be paid for each quarter in lump payments by Feb. 1, May 1, Aug. 1 and Nov. 1. "We have recently hired a new tax collector," **Sonia Alves-Viveiros**, Maplewood's business administrator, told the News-Record in an Aug. 16 email. "Given her professional advice regarding best practices for tax collection, partial payments should no longer be accepted, but rather in full."

Zaccheus, who now serves as the tax collector in both Maplewood and South Orange, will be doing so at least through 2019, according to South Orange Village President Sheena Collum at the June 11 South Orange Board of Trustees meeting. "The township of Maplewood has a temporary vacancy that they are intending to fill by a new CFO who is receiving their certification," Collum said at the meeting. "For the interim, they are asking for a shared services agreement which we are calling a contract for services."

Collum also said at the meeting that Maplewood may or may not hire its own tax collector in the future. Regardless, at the moment the township is not accepting partial payments, although it did so for many years. "I'm not sure why Maplewood would or would not accept partial payments," Morris Davis, a professor at the Rutgers University School of Business and the academic director of the Center for Real Estate, said in an email to the News-Record on Aug. 16. "Partial payments seems like financing to me."

Kevin Riordan, the executive director of the Rutgers Center for Real Estate, agreed that partial payments "finance a portion of the owner's tax liability." "The mortgage-servicing system for residential and commercial mortgages is predicated on a quarterly pay to the municipalities," Riordan said in an email to the News-Record on Aug. 16. "I think a simple reason may be it is just easier to account for four pays per year versus 12."

The payment schedule could potentially create problems for residents who have a limited income and are not able to pay taxes all at one time. "That has definitely been a problem in New Jersey," Riordan said about property taxes. "Given the increases in property taxes, they take up a bigger portion of lower incomes. As that happens, more homes are at risk of being lost by homeowners for delinquent taxes." Zaccheus did not return multiple requests for comment. Maplewood Mayor Vic DeLuca directed questions to **Alves-Viveiros**, who said residents who need to make partial payments could possibly make arrangements to do so with Zaccheus. "It's a case-by-case basis," she said in a phone interview with the News-Record on Aug. 20. "If necessary, they can make those arrangements with the tax collector."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros*(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Essex News Daily (NJ)
May 5, 2018

Maplewood chooses new BA

Author: *Amanda Valentovic*

The township announced last week that current Assistant Business Administrator **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** will be taking over as the township's next business administrator. Appointed May 1, **Alves-Viveiros** will officially begin as business administrator June 1. She has been working in Maplewood for the last two years, and will be taking over for Joseph Manning, who will retire at the end of May. Manning has been Maplewood's business administrator since 2005. "It's been pretty seamless, I'm here already so a lot of what I've been doing I'm familiar with," **Alves-Viveiros** said in an April 30 phone interview with the News-Record. "It'll be easy to step into."

This was one of the reasons Mayor Vic DeLuca said **Alves-Viveiros** stood out from the other five candidates interviewed for the position. "She's familiar with the system, and the transition will be easier," DeLuca said in an interview with the News-Record on April 30. "She showed that she could take on some changes and we liked how she presented her ideas for the future."

One aspect of the job **Alves-Viveiros** wants to focus on is capital planning; she said an important part of building this year's budget was prioritizing road and infrastructure improvements. "One of the things I wanted to highlight is capital planning for the township," **Alves-Viveiros** said. "I think we need more work there. We certainly have high taxes, so we wanted to make sure our spending was prioritized. Roads were something we needed for this year."

Before arriving in Maplewood, **Alves-Viveiros** served as deputy city clerk in Summit, and then as assistant municipal clerk and human resources assistant in Bernards Township. While there are similarities between Maplewood and her previous posts, **Alves-Viveiros** said there are also big differences between those municipalities. "The culture and needs are different," she said. "Roads and parking and things like that are generally the same. But demographically they're all very different."

Maplewood is a much more diverse town than both Summit and Bernards, according to **Alves-Viveiros**. "They're very different," she said. "I've liked my experience in each, but it teaches you where you want to be. Maplewood is exactly the type of town I want to be around. People are open minded and educated and know how they want to raise their kids, which is definitely something I relate to."

DeLuca said the town also chose **Alves-Viveiros** to take over as business administrator for the ideas that she has brought to Maplewood. "**Sonia** was the person we wanted to work with," he said. "She talked about servicing the people of the town and brought a new vision to it." Going forward, **Alves-Viveiros** wants to bring her vision for Maplewood to life. "I certainly want to be here for the long haul and accomplish what I set out to do," she said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TAPinto Edison (NJ)
October 21, 2016

New assistant township administrator in Maplewood

Author: *TAPinto SOMA staff*

Sonia Alves-Viveiros was appointed Assistant Township Administrator on Sept. 26, according to the fall edition of the Maplewood Leaflet. **Alves-Viveiros** has six years of prior experience working in the City of Summit and in Bernards Township, both in administration and in the Clerk's office, according to the Maplewood Leaflet.

A 2010 graduate of Seton Hall University with a Masters degree in Public Administration, **Alves-Viveiros** says, "working in local government has always been a passion and interest of mine." **Alves-Viveiros** continued, "I find working in Administration to be a key role in any municipality. You are responsible to make things work regardless of the challenges that may come and that's what I intend to do."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sonia Alves-Viveiros

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://villagegreennj.com/towns/meet-sonia-Alves-Viveiros-maplewoods-new-assistant-township-administrator/>
October 11, 2016

Meet Sonia Alves-Viveiros, Maplewood’s New Assistant Township Administrator

Sonia Alves-Viveiros

A new Assistant Township Administrator has arrived in Maplewood. **Sonia Alves-Viveiros** has been appointed to the position as of September 26th. She comes with experience from two municipalities, the City of Summit and Bernards Township. Throughout her 6-year career she has worked in both Administration and the Clerk’s office. She also graduated in 2010 from Seton Hall University with a Master’s in Public Administration.

Her interest in the local public sector started during her studies as an undergraduate at Seton Hall University as a Political Science major. After graduation from the prestigious MPA program at Seton Hall, soon thereafter, an internship was being offered through Millburn Township to work with the Administrator’s office where she gained an abundance of knowledge about all of the components that go into managing a municipality. Later on she went to work in Bernards Township and looked up to the municipality as a great leader in the public sector.

She is eager about coming to Maplewood Township with the knowledge and education she has gained throughout the last six years. Delivering and maintaining great customer service will be key in her new journey. “Working in local government has always been a passion and interest of mine,” says **Alves-Viveiros**. “I find working in Administration to be a key role in any municipality. You are responsible to make things work regardless of the challenges that may come and that’s what I intend to do.” She looks forward to providing outstanding service to both the Township and its residents.

Research Compiled by: Amanda Dillabough
 Colin Baenziger & Associates



Section 5

Sarah Jo Campbell

*Fernandina Beach City Manager
Candidate Report*

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Cover Letter and Resume

SARAH CAMPBELL

ICMA Credentialed Manager

Fleming Island, FL | 904.866.7966 | campbellsarahjo@gmail.com

July 17, 2024

Fernandina Beach City Commission
C/O Mr. Colin Baenziger
@Recruit28@cb0asso.com

RE: Recruitment for City of Fernandina Beach City Manager

Dear Mayor & Commission:

It is with great excitement that I submit my resume for consideration for this position. The City of Fernandina Beach is a treasure in Northeast Florida. For the last 22 years, I have become acquainted with the city as a visitor. It truly is a special place, and I'm sure I only know a small piece of it.

My entire city management career has been spent in Northeast Florida too, just on the opposite side of Jacksonville, in the Town of Orange Park. Orange Park is also a special place, and we deal with many similar issues. I have been with the Town for 16 years and I am ready to explore new opportunities.

As an ICMA Credentialed Manager, rest assured that I bring a type of leadership that is grounded in the Code of Ethics. So, beyond the legal minimums, I am held to a higher level of accountability for commission interactions, community engagement, my work product, and even my personal conduct.

In the spirit of transparency, I want to point out that my spouse is employed by the U.S. House of Representatives as Congressman Bean's District Director. Congressman Bean has a connection to your commission, through Mayor Bean. I have had no contact, direct or indirect, with either of these gentlemen about this role. While there is no conflict of interest, I did want to point out the connection in case of any inquiries.

Campbell, Sarah
July 17, 2024
Page 2

Selecting the next City Manager is no easy task. I have worked under three prior managers and have been through that transition. I do not envy the work you are about to embark on. I would love the opportunity to meet with you and the community to learn more about your goals and the challenges you are facing. I believe my education, skill set, experience, and personality will be a good fit for your community. While the challenges each of our communities have faced in recent years may vary on the surface, I believe municipal problems are often solved in similar ways.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Very truly yours,



Sarah Campbell

SARAH CAMPBELL

ICMA Credentialed Manager

Fleming Island, FL | 904.866.7966 | campbellsarahjo@gmail.com

EDUCATION

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

University of North Florida
2016

B.S. IN ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES

University of Nebraska Lincoln
1998

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FCCMA

President-Elect
Member since 2015

ICMA

Credentialed Manager
Member since 2010

FACC

Certified Municipal Clerk

PROFILE

Experienced Florida local government manager with fifteen years of stable leadership in one organization.

Respected leader and administrator; excellent organizational and communication skills; committed to developing community-centered governance in an atmosphere dedicated to employee support and development. Able to lead teams and not afraid of hard work. Believer in positive reinforcement and no-nonsense management style.

WORK EXPERIENCE

TOWN MANAGER

Town of Orange Park | Orange Park, FL | (2017 - Present)

Currently serving as the chief administrative officer for the Town. Work proactively with the elected body of five to ensure that all community goals are carried out through six departments – Police, Fire, Public Works (including water, sewer, & stormwater utilities), Economic & Community Development, Finance, and Administration.

- Comprehensive response to stormwater and resiliency in a waterfront community.
- Provide premium services while maintaining a debt-free status, high fund balance reserves, and lowering millage 2 times in six years.
- Completion of 20-year Strategic Vision Plan and supporting implementation activities.
- Actively involved in building collaborative relationships with Florida legislators, FDOT, Clay County, Clay EDC, Chamber of Commerce, and numerous non-profit community organizations.
- Completion of numerous capital improvement projects for roads, parks, and facilities. Includes participation in state and county road projects.
- Begin grant application and administration program for all departments including USDA, HMGP, CDBG, FRDAP, FDEP, SJRWMD, and the Town's first direct allocation from the State Legislature.
- Chief negotiator in collective bargaining with three public unions.

SARAH CAMPBELL

Page 2

EXPERTISE

Chief Administrative Officer
 Operations Management
 Budget Development
 Strategic Planning
 Human Resources
 Grant Administration
 Communications and Media
 Building Collaborative Teams
 Policy Development
 Collective Bargaining
 Capital Construction
 Long-range Planning
 Stormwater Management
 Public Speaking

AWARDS

Florida League of Cities
 Home Rule Hero
 2022, 2023, & 2024

FCCMA
 B. Harold Farmer Scholarship
 2015

Peter Kiewit Foundation
 Comprehensive Scholarship
 1992

- Participate in all emergency response and hurricane preparation activities including NIMS coursework and joint Clay EOC planning.
- Established conservation land acquisition program, adding 11 parcels and creating three new parks.
- Professionalization of leadership team, and promotion of staff development through monthly Lunch-N-Learn program and collaborative inter-department orientations.

ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER/TOWN CLERK

Town of Orange Park | Orange Park, FL | (2008 – 2017)

Provided support to town managers as second in command and head of the Legislative Department. Responsible for preparation of all meeting materials and minutes for Town Council and 14 citizen boards and committees. Responsible for timely and accurate response to public records requests. The Town Clerk also acts as the supervisor of annual Town elections.

- Led human resource activities for the Town; standardize hiring and termination practices to reduce risk; begin employee appreciation events, conduct internal investigations, coordinate state and federal investigations, oversee drug testing program.
- Coordinate Town communications through website, notices, advertising, press releases and social media.
- Oversee Events and Recreation Coordinator, providing oversight of 7 municipal park facilities and 22 annual events.
- Oversee special projects and research including purchasing and tree management policies, compensation plan development, consolidation of staff duties, street light repair program, public safety mold remediation projects, and peer city information.

INTERIM TOWN MANAGER

Town of Orange Park | Orange Park, FL | (2010-2011)

Managed day-to-day operations of the Town for a 6-month period through departments including Public Works, Police, Fire, General Services, Finance, and Legislative.

- Led adoption of 2010-2011 budget.
- Began regular senior staff meetings and department visits.
- Restructured Capital Budget funding.
- Oversaw award of Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant Phase 2 and Public Works Plainfield/Ash water main repair.
- Oversaw design and implementation of new tiered utility rate billing structure.
- Oversaw cleanup project of facilities and implemented process for sale of surplus equipment.

SARAH CAMPBELL

Page 3

**COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT**

**Clay Women's
Empowerment Council**
President

**Rotary Club of Orange Park
Sunrise**
Member

**University of North Florida
M.P.A. Steering Committee**
Member

**Grove Park Elementary
School**
Mentoring Program

**HOBBIES
& INTERESTS**

Reading

Jacksonville Galloway Running
Club

Adventure Travel

LEGAL ASSISTANT

Kopelousos & Bradley, PA | Orange Park, FL | (2005-2008)
(N.K.A. Bradley, Garrison & Komando)

Legal assistant for four attorneys working in the areas of municipal law,
land use, corporate, and family law.

- Took minutes for Town of Orange Park Council, board, and committee meetings, reviewed ordinances, prepared correspondence.
- Prepared special assessment rolls related to special taxing districts.
- Reviewed legal descriptions and surveys for accuracy in land use matters.

Candidate Introduction

Sarah Campbell

EDUCATION

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, University of North Florida - 2016
B.S. IN ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES, University of Nebraska Lincoln – 1998
ICMA – Certified Manager
IIMC – Certified Municipal Clerk

EXPERIENCE

Town of Orange Park, Town Manager	2017 - Present
Town of Orange Park, Assistant Town Manager/Town Clerk	2008 - 2017
Kopelousos & Bradley - Legal Assistant	2005 - 2008

BACKGROUND

The Town of Orange Park is a suburb of the City of Jacksonville, Florida. It is located in Clay County and has a population of just under 10,000. Two of the boundaries are tidal water bodies – the St. Johns River and Doctors Lake. The remaining boundaries are with Jacksonville and unincorporated Clay County. While the permanent population of the Town is on the smaller side, over 80,000 vehicles pass through the Town each day on U.S. Route 17 making our relationship with partners like FDOT and Clay County critical. The Town has one interchange at I-295 and US 17. The Town is predominantly built out and is home to eight large hotels, a parimutuel gambling facility, numerous medical facilities, and Moosehaven: a 60-acre, waterfront retirement community for Loyal Order of Moose members. The Town operates ten park facilities and hosts over 30 community events every year.

As a full-service municipality, the Town employs 115 people, approximately 100 are full-time. The departments from largest to smallest are – Police, Public Works, Fire, Finance, Economic & Community Development, and Administration.

My role as manager is to supervise the six department heads, one human resources manager and one administrative assistant.

The current year's General Fund Budget is \$15 million, and the Total Budget is \$24 million. The enterprise funds include – Water & Sewer, Stormwater, Sales Tax, Gas Tax, and several smaller special revenue funds. The Town is fiscally conservative and has maintained a debt-free status since 2015. All projects for the last nine years have either been cash or grant funded. During that same timeframe, we have lowered our millage three times (6.30, 6.18, 5.88, and 5.70).

For the last several years the Town has focused on three major areas: stormwater, a 20-year strategic vision plan, and grants.

- The stormwater focus was borne out of the Hurricane Irma disaster in 2017. The storm caused flooding in more than 20 structures and allowed us to implement our first Stormwater Utility. There is now a dedicated staff of five, focusing on routine stormwater maintenance, full assessments of our facilities and needs, identified capital projects and completion of numerous improvements.
- The 20-year strategic vision plan was a community-focused project that kicked off in 2019. The Town, through a grant from FDEO, partnered with Haskell to develop Vision 2040, our strategic plan. After adoption of the plan by the Council, staff, boards, and committees were assigned the tasks of implementation. Major accomplishments to date include revised codes, new events, a branding study, new logo and website, and a concept study for a proposed Town square.
- The third major focus has been on grants. Because of our size and our financial position, we need to leverage every dollar possible. We started our grant program five years ago, utilizing the services of a local grant writing firm and local engineering firms. We have had grant awards from USDA, FDEO, FDEP, SJRWMD, FDOS, Firehouse Subs and other smaller agencies. Our largest grants to date have been \$3.1 million for a Voluntary Home Buyout Program, and \$7 million for reconstruction of four culverts. The program has been so successful that we have added two additional firms to write and administer grants for us.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

The City of Fernandina Beach is a special place! I first visited the Shrimp Festival in 2002, shortly after moving to Florida. Because it is only an hour away, I have had the pleasure of visiting many times over the years – camping at Fort Clinch and hearing the shrimp boats leave in the morning, participating in half marathons, walking on Egan’s Creek Greenway, watching an incredible drone display at Dickens on Centre, catching some sun at North Beach, breakfast at Ms. Carolyn’s, or browsing at the Farmers Market. The rich history, the shopping, dining, events and beaches are all great reasons to visit the city. But therein lies the issue – the constant tension between residents and business owners who have invested in a wonderful community – are then frustrated by the success and intrusion of tourists, traffic, and trash. Balance is at the heart of the solutions. Balancing the environment and economy. Balancing the marina and parking. Balancing residents’ quality of life and a destination community. It would be a great honor to serve the community and help them achieve their goals.

I have high expectations for our Department Heads and team leaders. They are subject matter experts in their field. I want to learn from them, support them, and question them when needed. My goal is to support their teams with resources, training, and equipment so they can do their jobs to the best of their ability. My team has wide latitude to make decisions within their purview and their budget. However, the law, codes, policies, and safety need to take priority. I am a

Sarah Campbell

stickler for the rules and am not a change agent by nature. We should support the policies and procedures we have in place and amend them when it is apparent change is needed. I believe in our employees as whole individuals, not a cog in a machine. We must support them as people first, leading with love, as the best way to accomplish personal, professional, and organizational goals.

My team and I have a great rapport. They would say that I have an open-door policy, that I support and encourage them and that I care about them. They would be sad to see me leave. They can come to me for advice on big or small issues. I often help them with words – words for a difficult conversation, or words for a sensitive email. I can be funny or sarcastic. They are in awe of my composure at public meetings. I believe in personal growth and ask them how I can best support them in various situations.

I have a good relationship with our elected body. We have consistent and routine communication. I view my role as the pinch point of an hourglass. I take in feedback from the community and the elected body and then convey that to our department heads and staff. As manager, I have worked for 14 different elected officials. While I report to the council as a whole, I have relationships with each one of them as individuals too. We meet weekly to review agendas, talk about their goals and priorities, and to discuss internal operations. I have found that to be the best way to provide consistent information to everyone. I also communicate information via email. Phone calls and texts are helpful for urgent information, newsworthy events, or when face-to-face meetings are not possible. The Council counts on me to be prepared at meetings, friendly and professional, responsive, and transparent.

My strengths include excellent communication and organization skills. I enjoy problem solving and looking for innovative solutions. I can quickly understand complex scenarios and ask questions to determine core issues. I have a calm, easy-going demeanor and am seldom flustered.

Because of my calm demeanor, some find my lack of high emotion to be a weakness when it comes to urgent situations. Some emergency situations do require quick action, but not necessarily high emotion. Because I do not make snap decisions, I have let a negative personnel situation linger for too long, giving the individual multiple opportunities for improvement. Ultimately, I did ask this person to leave our organization, but learned a valuable lesson that delaying a hard decision can cause more harm than good. I have found the ICMA Credentialing Program to be helpful in self-assessment and education to improve weak areas.

In the Town, many of our departments prepare monthly or quarterly reports of their activities – police actions, fire & EMS calls, water & sewer usage, HR activities, etc. While they provide the raw data I take great pleasure in the analysis of the data. I have built my own spreadsheets to compile and graph their reports. I can then look at larger trends and provide feedback to the departments. This was recently helpful with the Police Department when we noticed a dramatic drop off in traffic enforcement. The data allowed the Chief to review each squad's on-view activity and make recommendations for improvements. After only one quarter, the traffic

enforcement numbers have increased dramatically. Because each department now has several areas that they are measuring, we are drafting the Town's first-ever annual report.

I would say my biggest success in the last seven years has been our stormwater program. This was not an area that I had an affinity for, or even knew much about. The Town had two previous failed attempts to develop a stormwater utility under prior administrations. However, Hurricane Irma struck Florida ten days before I became the manager. My first actions as manager were to understand the flood devastation in our Town and meet with residents about their concerns. This storm created an opportunity that we had never had before. It was the impetus for action. Using contracted engineering services, we assessed our system and then modeled the ideal system. This comparison allowed us to identify where the deficiencies were, and the scope of capital projects needed. Once the list of maintenance and improvements was identified, we had the justification for implementation of a new stormwater fee. A new fee is difficult for any community, even if it is for a new level of service. To make the new fee less painful, we timed it to coincide with a decrease in water and sewer rates (after paying off debts, a rate study showed that we were in good position to lower rates by 5%). So, while one fee went down, a new one was applied. Funds are not unlimited in the new utility. There is enough for a maintenance crew and some capital work. Ultimately, we have relied on grants to fund the major improvements. The work can never be done fast enough, but we have taken a systematic and fiscally responsible approach to solving an issue that had been unresolved for more than 40 years.

I would say my biggest mistake came when I was working as the Town Clerk. During an election season, an objection was filed against some signed petitions. The exclusion of the petitions would have eliminated a candidate from the race. I defended the petitions because the form (while standardized in practice) was not in agreement with the Town Code. The Town Council had to conduct a hearing and take evidence to determine if the petitions were valid. Ultimately, they disagreed with my position and determined that the candidate did not meet the qualifications. The candidate was removed from the race and an uncontested candidate took office. I learned that it would have been better to admit that the form was standardized and therefore should have been properly completed instead of making an argument for the outdated code. The issue of Town elections became moot when all Clay County municipalities aligned their election dates and outsourced the management of the election to the County Supervisor of Elections.

As a manager it is sometimes necessary to conduct terminations. I have probably conducted between five to seven in a 15-year span. Most of the terminations were for misconduct, those are easier decisions to make because a flagrant violation of a law or policy means that the individual cannot remain in our organization. Regardless of the situation, I handle them very seriously. These are not callous or rash decisions. They are hard decisions made in the best interests of the Town. Our co-workers become like our family, making some terminations very emotional and difficult for everyone. One other category of termination is for poor performance. These are less frequent and can be more difficult. In these cases, my goal is to help the individual improve their performance first through discussions, coaching or a performance improvement plan. If

improvement is not made in the agreed upon timeline, then termination will result. The individual can become frustrated because they feel they didn't do anything "wrong." Clear expectations at the beginning of the process are needed so that everyone understands the ramifications.

There are many challenges facing the City. I want to learn more about them and the community before making any recommendations to the Commission. The ongoing discussion with the community about the marina and redevelopment of the waterfront is an important issue. Citizen engagement should be an important part of that decision making process. Tensions regarding the environment and local corporations are complicated. I would like to meet individuals from the respective organizations to learn more about their concerns and possible solutions. The operation of enterprise activities like the airport, golf course, and marina need careful fiscal consideration. If these operations cannot support themselves independently, the community deserves transparency to determine what their tolerance is for supporting amenities through general revenues of the City. The driving force behind any thriving city is its team of employees. I imagine that the rapid leadership changes over the last year caused anxiety and frustration on their part. I want to reassure them of steady leadership. The City cannot live up to its potential if these hard working individuals are not supported.

For the first six months in Fernandina Beach, I plan to meet as many people as possible – residents, employees, business owners, local partners, and stakeholders! I have a good sense of the layout, geography and locations but I don't know anyone there. I want to understand what the Commission's goals are and what the status of current projects are. I want to listen and learn. Then I will jump right in to working on priority projects- helping the Commission develop solutions that meet the needs of the community and start developing the 2025 priorities, capital plan and budgets.

I have a great relationship with the media. I am happy to spend time with them and build an honest and transparent relationship. I find a positive relationship to be beneficial for both parties. There are times when we need them to share our message and story just as much as they seek stories from us.

Social media is an integral part of staying connected with our community. I believe every community should use it to their advantage. Tell your story! If you don't someone else will. I expect staff will communicate regularly (daily) with the public through social media channels. It is also an important way to answer questions and share positive news or events.

I was fortunate to start the Town's first Facebook page when I was the Town Clerk. More than meeting announcements or sharing employee promotions, we grew the platform in fun and engaging ways. Government does not have to take itself so seriously. Sometimes things that happen in our community are really funny! Share them. Make fun of yourself too. Residents appreciate when we can laugh at our own mistakes. I grew our platform to reach more people than lived in our Town. Because of the growth of the platform, we were prepared to serve as an

Sarah Campbell

important information outlet during severe weather. Our team now takes shifts during storms to make sure that someone is answering social media questions around the clock.

When news of my participation in this process becomes known, I expect some residents (maybe 4 or 5) will make contact. I can provide their names if needed. Typically, they make remarks on social media posts. I would not expect them to reach out directly.

My spouse and I have been married for 28 years. We have two adult children and a grandchild. We enjoy spending time with them when their schedules allow. As an empty nester I have more time for hobbies like running half-marathons. I completed my first sprint-triathlon last year. I enjoy reading and started taking piano lessons. I love traveling to new places for fun adventures like snorkeling in the Galapagos Islands this past spring.

SIX ADJECTIVES OR PHRASES YOU WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF

Patient, calm, smart, organized, well-spoken, and calm.

REASON FOR WANTING TO LEAVE CURRENT JOB

I have been with the Town for close to 16 years now. I love this community. It will always be a special place to me. As a mid-career executive, I am ready to take on some new challenges. My goal is to work in a larger community with new opportunities. I think the Town could also benefit from a fresh set of eyes and a new perspective to bring it through the remainder of the strategic plan.

CURRENT/MOST RECENT OR RELEVANT SALARY

My current salary is \$150,118 which includes vehicle and phone allowances.

Section 5

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
SARAH JO CAMPBELL**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County Clay County, FL	No Records Found
State Florida	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County Clay County, FL	October 2022 – Traffic Violation Expired License (6 months or less) Exceeding the speed limit Disposition: October 2022 , fine April 2008 – Traffic Violation Failure to obey traffic control device Disposition: July 2008 , closed August 2004 – Traffic Violation Expired Registration (6 months or less) Disposition: January 2005 , closed
Federal Florida	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

Florida	*See October 2022 record for Clay County
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Credit

Excellent

Personal Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Sex Offender Registry

Not Listed

Education

Confirmed

Employment

Confirmed

Social Media

Nothing of Concern Found

**Background Check Summary for
SARAH JO CAMPBELL**

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
SARAH JO CAMPBELL
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant Sarah Campbell

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes ☐ No ☒
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes ☐ No ☒
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes ☐ No ☒
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes ☐ No ☒
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes ☐ No ☒
6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated, driving under the influence, operating a vehicle impaired, or a similar offense?
Yes ☐ No ☒
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes ☐ No ☒
8. Please list all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one.
Sarah Campbell - FB Sarah Campbell LI
SCampbellman - IG SCampbellman - X
9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes ☐ No ☒
10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

Attested to:

Sarah Campbell
Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via PDF DOCUMENT to Lynelle@cb-asso.com or via fax to
(561) 621-5965 **no later than 5:00 PM MST 07/10/2024.**

(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes Sarah Campbell

Alan Watt – Former Mayor, Town of Orange Park, FL 940-742-0728

Mr. Watt has known Ms. Campbell since around 2015. Mr. Watt served on the Council for six years and was the Mayor for one year and the Vice Mayor for one year. They worked closely together when he was on the Council, and he still considers her a good friend. Ms. Campbell is always well informed, if asked a question she generally has the answer.

Mr. Watt gave Ms. Campbell a 5 out of 5 on her performance evaluation for the last four years of his tenure, and he gave her a 4.6 and 4.8 in the first two years. She consistently received 4.6 to 5.0 ratings from the Board on her performance evaluations.

Mr. Watt was the Mayor during the pandemic. He worked with Ms. Campbell to keep the Town open and functioning while taking care of their citizens. They never shut the doors or ignored the phone. She kept everything going and gave credit to the department heads. She made good decisions both when hiring personnel and in general.

Ms. Campbell addressed many issues that had been ignored for decades, like storm water drainage. Their drainage issues became very apparent during Hurricane Irma, and she resolved them. She was heavily involved in keeping track of and pushing their strategic plan, the streetscape plan, and other future planning. She was an integral part of every function. She knew when to talk and when not to talk, and she did not interject when Councilmembers were responsible for the matter. She let them do their job and she did hers. She provided the guidance to staff to complete the objectives of the Council. She was exceptional to work with.

Heavily involved in the Florida League of Cities, Ms. Campbell is an officer in the organization. She drives around Town and knows what is happening. She looks for issues and adds them to her list. She shares these issues with the appropriate department head so they can be addressed.

The Board met every Tuesday. Ms. Campbell was willing to meet with every elected official prior to the meeting to answer questions. She is not afraid to tell the elected body when they cannot legally do something, and suggests an alternative path to achieve their objective that is within the confines of the law.

When it comes to finance, Ms. Campbell is excellent. She understands municipal accounting which most people do not. Elected officials are often business oriented, and they focus on profit and loss, which is different from municipal finance. She runs a terrific budget process and understands it all completely. She has a great finance team. They have not had any comments on their audits for four years.

Ms. Campbell keeps track of her assignments and always reports back on the progress. She handles stressful moments very well. The Town had very challenging circumstances with the pandemic, flooding, and very controversial development issues. She managed through it all well.

**Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell**

Ms. Campbell has not been involved in any negative news stories or controversies. Nothing in her background or conduct would concern a reasonable person.

Mr. Watt would definitely hire Ms. Campbell. She has been the voice of reason for Orange Park and is extremely experienced. She is an outstanding manager. He and most of the community would hate to see her leave Orange Park.

Words or phrases used to describe Sarah Campbell:

- Exceptional,
- Pleasant,
- Informative,
- Organized,
- Incredibly well informed, and
- Pulls the best from the staff.

Strengths: Organizational ability, calmness under fire, incredibly well informed.

Weaknesses: Occasionally she may get crosswise with an employee because of a personality conflict but this is very minor.

Phyllis Renninger – Former Councilmember, Town of Orange Park, FL 904-264-5121

Ms. Renninger was on the Town Council when Ms. Campbell worked as a legal assistant for Kopelousos & Bradley in 2005. Ms. Renninger reached her term limit as an elected official about the time her husband was elected to the Council. Towards the end of his term, Ms. Campbell became the interim manager and then the Town Manager. Currently Ms. Renninger writes grants for the Town and works closely with Ms. Campbell in this capacity. Ms. Campbell reviews every grant and attends every meeting. Ms. Campbell was hired as the Town Clerk in 2008, and she was known as the go-to person which has continued to this day. She is very knowledgeable.

A learning curve exists in government, and it is not necessarily based on common sense but on rules and regulations. Ms. Campbell is very knowledgeable. She works well with the consultants and the public. Working with the vocal minority can be challenging at times but she is always very fair, calm, and professional.

Employees hired by Ms. Campbell are good and she listens to them. She believes in succession planning, and promotes from within when possible. Her decisions have always been good. They have been successful in securing and managing grant funding for the Town.

Ms. Campbell is very innovative, but she is also wise with the budget and resources. She will initiate a study to ensure that an idea is beneficial before committing resources to it. They are

**Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell**

currently working on an initiative that was identified in the 2040 vision plan regarding a Town square. She gathered input from the people, which the citizens appreciate. When an idea is feasible and beneficial, she moves forward.

Ms. Campbell attends almost every event. She is at functions, the market, activities, and evening movies. She is very engaged with residents.

Keeping others informed and maintaining excellent records are something Ms. Campbell does extremely well. They are trying to close out a grant from 2020 that was a HUD Grant. However, the Florida Commerce department made some changes since it was awarded which has complicated the process. Ms. Campbell has had to remember conversations from four years ago. She pulls up the records and the emails. She keeps good track of the data so that she can recreate the steps and provide a credible answer.

Vocal minorities have opinions at times, and it does not matter to them what the facts are. Ms. Campbell handles it all well. Her background is clear of any controversy. She has good connections and a nice family.

Ms. Renninger would definitely hire Ms. Campbell and wishes her the best. She has done an incredible job in Orange Park. Good managers are very hard to come by and they have been very lucky to have her engagement for as long as they have. She will be a good advocate for whatever community she works for.

Words or phrases used to describe Sarah Campbell:

- Professional,
- Thorough,
- Informed,
- Friendly,
- Community minded, and
- Family oriented.

Strengths: Excellent manager, engaged, very knowledgeable, very fair, calm, and professional.

Weaknesses: Very hands on and involved in everything. She handles it all well, and it is positive for the Town, but her work/life balance may not be what it should be.

Jon Cantrell – Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce, Orange Park, FL 907-710-8181

Mr. Cantrell has lived in the community since the late 1990s. He publishes the newspaper for Clay County which include legal notices for Orange Park. He has known Ms. Campbell since

Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell

2008. He also leases space from the Town, so she is essentially his landlord. Ms. Campbell and her husband are good people. She is top shelf and a great fit for any executive position.

Ms. Campbell manages a large group of people with diverse duties. She provides direction on what needs to be done to the staff while serving the Council. She takes direction from the Council with enthusiasm and a will to work.

Hiring is an important part of the job. Ms. Campbell has good staff she can rely on and it makes her job easier. She built a good team. She is also visible in the community. She is part of the Chamber and attends their signature events and monthly luncheons. She interacts with a variety of people at these events. She is also the Chair of the Women Empowerment Group which has a quarterly meeting through the Chamber at Club Continental. She is on the Committee to organize it and has volunteers to help as well. She works very well with the public.

Ms. Campbell has connections with the regional managers, and they meet monthly or quarterly. She is well versed in emergency management and working with FEMA. Her shoes will be hard to fill when she leaves.

Ms. Campbell is responsible for union negotiations for the police and fire department. She is always levelheaded. She helps employees who are struggling. She has led several employee teams over the years to resolve many issues. She never seems stressed and is always easy going.

The Town must publish their financial statements and manage the budget according to the law. Ms. Campbell has a good knowledge of finance and hired a controller who has done an amazing job. She is also willing to meet with community members to go over the budget with them.

Land usage can be controversial because property owners want to build whatever what they want regardless of the code. Ms. Campbell is an objective observer because these matters are handled by the Board. However, she assists in the resolution. Her conduct and background would not concern an employer. People might complain when they do not get their way, but it happens in every community. Orange Park runs very smoothly and is built out. They are working on a new streetscape. She is aggressive about preparing for the future and is very safety conscious.

Mr. Cantrell would hire Ms. Campbell. She is a top recruit for a city or county management position. She is very experienced.

Words or phrases used to describe Sarah Campbell:

- Professional,
- Kind,
- Helpful,
- Clean freak,
- Observant, and
- Levelheaded.

**Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell**

Strengths: Educated, smart, surrounds herself with professionals, teacher, coach, very organized, takes direction with enthusiasm and a will to work.

Weaknesses: She is very busy and covers many areas, but this is not her fault. She answers to the Board.

Cindy Cheatwood – President, Historic Society, Town of Orange Park, FL 904-707-0822

Ms. Cheatwood has known Ms. Campbell since the 2000s. Ms. Cheatwood was on a Committee and met Ms. Campbell while she was the Town Clerk. Ms. Cheatwood has watched Ms. Campbell progress and grow into the position. Her professionalism and attention to detail are very impressive.

Every community must balance interests between those who favor the modern and those who favor tradition. Ms. Campbell has the Town's best interest in mind, along with a modern approach. She worked with Ms. Cheatwood for a long time to improve paramedicine. The way she helped students see their way forward was impressive.

When making decisions Ms. Campbell is not rash, which is appreciated. She is both innovative and she maintains operations at a high level. She sees the short and the long-term effects of suggested courses of action. She tries to lead the community for the greater good which can be hard in the moment. She never shows sign of stress, even in tense Board meetings.

Ms. Campbell has been to legislative meetings at Tallahassee. She is an avid runner and is always very friendly to those she encounters on her run. She attends the farmer's market, movie night, and events around town. She once taught people how to make butter while wearing a costume that fit the time frame.

Public/Private partnerships are important to Ms. Campbell. For example, the Town had a bar back in the day that used specific glass bottles. Children earned money by collecting the bottles and returning them to the bar. She was given some of these old bottles. Instead of keeping them or recycling them, she wanted the community to have them. She gave them to the Historic Society and is helping to find a better venue to display these bottles and similar historical items.

When there was an issue with water flow at an athletic venue Ms. Campbell personally went to investigate the problem and help determine a solution. She is always very responsive. She relays information quickly unless she needs time to research the matter.

A property owner cannot pay for modifications on a historical structure that is part of the agricultural story of the community. This structure is part of a pecan grove that was a major employer for residents in the 1930s. Ms. Campbell is working on grants to provide funding that will make the structure useable to nonprofit and neighborhood groups.

**Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell**

Some topics have been contentious, like a meeting about feral cats in which Ms. Campbell had to mediate between the cat people and the non-cat people. She managed it well. Nothing in her conduct would concern a reasonable person. She works well with everyone.

Ms. Cheatwood would hire Ms. Campbell. Ms. Cheatwood has worked with eight or nine managers and Ms. Campbell is the best that she has seen. It will be very difficult to hire someone as good as she is, should she leave.

Words or phrases used to describe Sarah Campbell:

- Thorough,
- Intelligent,
- Trustworthy,
- Motivated,
- Energetic, and
- Approachable.

Strengths: Looks at everything through a larger scope.

Weaknesses: People say that she is not warm, but Ms. Cheatwood does not feel the same. As manager Ms. Campbell must be objective and not as emotionally driven as some might expect her to be from a hometown point of view.

Courtney Russo – Town Clerk, Town of Orange Park, FL 904-278-3011

Ms. Russo was hired as the Administrative Assistant in 2015. She worked with Ms. Campbell as the Town Clerk. Ms. Russo became the Town Clerk when Ms. Campbell became the Town Manager.

Orange Park is a high performing organization and Ms. Campbell prides herself on how it runs. She wants employees to pick up when residents call. She encourages them to have a small-town approach where everyone is made to feel important. She holds employees to a high standard.

Because Ms. Campbell is approachable, employees never feel hesitant to talk to her. She really values employees and wants them to be happy in their job. She is an encyclopedia, the amount of knowledge that she holds is amazing.

Ms. Campbell is responsible for hiring department heads and most of them have been in place for a long time. She makes good hiring decisions and finds individuals who stay for the long term. When making decisions in general she can be too nice at times, but she does what is appropriate for all parties involved.

Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell

The Mayor initiates interactions to meet with residents and Ms. Campbell always attends. Prior to any construction she and the Mayor visit the affected neighborhoods to talk to residents and ensure they know what is happening. They answer questions and listen to complaints.

To keep everyone informed Ms. Campbell meets weekly or bi-weekly with department heads. She also has a weekly meeting with the Human Resource Manager who is part of the legislative department and the Town Clerk. She checks in with the staff, but she is not a micromanager.

During covid the Town was not shut down for long. Ms. Campbell kept the Town moving and they only shut down for a few weeks or a month. They worked together to figure out how to keep the Town functioning and utilized Zoom to allow for public participation. Business owners still need permits, and the Town had to function. They worked collectively to remain open while making sure that employees and residents were safe.

The Town has not had any debt since 2015. Ms. Campbell manages the resources well and works within their means. She accomplishes a vast number of tasks in a short time. She is very organized. She has a spreadsheet for everything and manages her time well.

Ms. Campbell recommended they terminate employment of their Fire Chief and it was controversial, but not related to her. Her actions are above board and have never been under scrutiny. Her conduct is such that it would not concern an employer.

Ms. Russo would hire Ms. Campbell, and they would hate to see her leave Orange Park. She is a great manager. While she expects a great deal from the staff, when employees have a bad day or run into an issue they can go to her, and she never makes them feel bad. She is always very open with them. She is a great supervisor.

Words or phrases used to describe Sarah Campbell:

- Organized,
- Intelligent,
- Thinks outside the box, and
- Not a micro manager.

Strengths: Excellent manager, open door policy, very professional, very knowledgeable, values employees, very levelheaded, calm, thinks outside the box, very smart.

Weaknesses: None identified.

**Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell**

Randy Case – Police Chief, Town of Orange Park, FL 904-264-5555

Mr. Case has worked for the Police Department for Orange Park during Ms. Campbell's entire tenure. They met in 2008.

Ms. Campbell hires good staff. She works in a team setting. On specific projects she is a good moderator and tries to lead the group to the best solution. She encourages feedback from various departments in the town. She listens and is accountable. She has utilized applications, grants, and technology in their work. She sets standards that ensure they are functioning at a high level and then maintains operations at that level.

Ms. Campbell attends all the Council meetings. She attends Committee meetings if the administration wants firsthand knowledge of the matters discussed. She comes to Cone or Coffee with a Cop and is very active in the community. She is part of the Rotary Club. With community groups it can be hard to reach a happy spot for both groups, but she is very diplomatic and tries to resolve the matter. She is a good problem solver who works well with others.

On a quarterly basis Ms. Campbell organized a lunch to discuss various topics while receiving feedback from employees. She arranges guest speakers to come in and share information and perspectives. She keeps everyone informed and is open with information.

During specific issues Ms. Campbell wants feedback from staff and expects a resolution to the issues, but she lets departments solve their problems. When staff is given the authority to act, they often surprise you and do something wonderful. Or, it may not be the best idea ever, but they learn from it. She allows them to gain that necessary experience.

The Finance Director and Ms. Campbell have produced an outstanding budget. She balances the needs well. Every department wants to have new applications or technology, she reviews them and lets them know when it is not possible in the current fiscal year. In stressful situations, she remains cool and stays calm.

A former Fire Chief was disgruntled when the town decided to end his employment. He hired an attorney and brought the matter out in the public, when it could have been taken care of privately. This controversy is the only one that Mr. Case can recall. Ms. Campbell is not personally involved in controversy. Those who are unhappy with her work are very few and far between, they are a very small sampling of residents.

Mr. Case would hire Ms. Campbell immediately if he had the opportunity. He does not want her to leave, and he would keep her in Orange Park if he could. She is an outstanding manager.

Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell

Words or phrases used to describe Sarah Campbell:

- Intelligent,
- Personable,
- Easy to work with,
- Hard worker,
- Diplomatic, and
- Good problem solver.

Strengths: Outstanding manager, easy to get along with, exceptional person, hard worker, extremely intelligent.

Weaknesses: Once in a while she displays her thoughts on her face, which has not been a problem in Orange Park, but it could be depending on who she works with.

Jody Brooks – Former External Attorney, Town of Orange Park, FL 904-860-4926

Ms. Brooks was the outside Counsel for Orange Park. She worked with Ms. Campbell from 2023 to 2024. They met in passing around 2019 as they both live in Clay County.

Ms. Campbell hired the Public Works Director, and he has done a fabulous job, everyone is well pleased with him. She has also addressed several personnel issues. She is an incredible Manager.

While the Council generally gives Ms. Campbell direction, she has initiated conversations around establishing an identity for the Town and other initiatives for improvements in the community. She is innovative and creative.

Ms. Campbell was very active in the community. She was good about keeping others informed. She was very helpful during a litigation matter. She has also worked with collective bargaining with three unions. She negotiated between them and the Council to put the contracts to bed.

Ms. Campbell is not only responsive, but she is quick to respond. She is very even keeled in even the most difficult circumstances and does not let stress show. She is just an impressive manager.

Previously Ms. Campbell applied for a County Manager position with St. Johns County and had not notified the Council until she was selected for an interview. Some members of the Council were disappointed, and it became a public discussion. This matter may not be considered controversial, but it was discussed in the public domain. Nothing in her personal or professional conduct would concern a reasonable person.

Ms. Brooks would hire Ms. Campbell in a heartbeat. Whatever community is looking at her, should hire her. She has done a great job for Orange Park.

Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell

Words or phrases used to describe Sarah Campbell:

- Even keeled,
- Pleasant,
- Encouraging,
- Dedicated,
- Organized, and
- Thoughtful.

Strengths: Communication, historic and institutional knowledge, great memory, good work ethic, dependable, loyal, organization, has a kind nature while being business oriented, solid person.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Connie Thomas – Former Mayor, Town of Orange Park, FL 904-553-4336

Ms. Thomas has known Ms. Campbell since 2014. Ms. Thomas served on the Town Council and was the Mayor. They met weekly so that Ms. Campbell could keep Ms. Thomas up to date. Ms. Campbell is an excellent manager who is always on top of things.

Ms. Campbell makes good decisions both when hiring personnel and in general. She has been innovative for Orange Park, and she keeps the organization functioning at a high level. She has great financial skills and stays on top of the budget.

Ms. Campbell is very visible in the community. She is very good with the public. Everyone knows her and she is very kind. All the comments made about her by the residents that Ms. Thomas has heard are positive. Ms. Campbell is customer service oriented.

Ms. Campbell brought a team together, as well as other governmental entities at the state and regional level, to resolve waterway issues. She understands that the job comes with much stress. She tried her best to take stress in stride.

Orange Park has had some controversy, but nothing occurred that is related to Ms. Campbell personally. She is not involved in anything that would concern an employer.

Ms. Thomas would hire Ms. Campbell in a heartbeat. She is an excellent manager.

Reference Notes
Sarah Campbell

Words or phrases used to describe Sarah Campbell:

- Efficient,
- Kind,
- Smart,
- Innovative, and
- Thorough.

Strengths: Organization, looking at the bigger picture, finding resources.

Weaknesses: Not a weakness, but she has a heart for people and that can really pull on you.

Prepared by: Lynelle Klein
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
July 25, 2024

Town of Orange Park completes 21 home improvements

The Town of Orange Park completed repairs to 21 homes through its ARPA Builders Care Home Improvement Program this week. The program started in June 2022 using the American Recovery Plan Act Funds. It targeted low-income, disabled, or elderly homeowners to improve their safety concerns. The Town received 39 applications, of which 21 met the program's qualifications. The Town partnered with Builders Care of Northeast Florida to complete the work. Builders Care is a faith-based nonprofit construction contractor whose mission is to provide affordable to no-cost construction services to the elderly, disabled, veterans, and other nonprofits in Northeast Florida to build a better habitat for all. They combine purchased and donated materials with volunteer and professional labor to provide cost-effective construction to those in need.

Executive Director Krissy Barkas said, “We were grateful for the opportunity to participate in an exceptional program where we assisted over 20 homeowners in making necessary repairs beyond their financial means. The program was highly successful and well received throughout the community.”

Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** worked closely with Barkas to inspect each home and identify appropriate projects. Through the program, 13 new roofs were installed. Other homeowners received help with plumbing, electrical systems, heating and air conditioning systems, and new doors and windows. The Town invested more than \$275,000 in the repairs and improvements.

“We were excited that the Town Council approved a program utilizing ARPA funds to provide much-needed assistance to some of our senior residents; we must support our community's most vulnerable members,” Mayor Randy Thompson said. “We are proud to have been able to offer this support and will continue to seek ways to aid our residents where we can.”

Stephen Smith, Director of Economic and Community Development, said, “The ARPA Builders Care program was a successful public/private partnership. It met a documented need for these Town residents, and the improvements should last many years.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
July 18, 2024

Proposed millage rate of 5.7000 for Orange Park
Jack Randall

The total taxable value of all properties in Orange Park was assessed in 2024 to be \$855,587,043 — an increase of 6.48% since last year. An increase in property values, when all else is equal, typically means an increase in revenue for the town. Property taxes — also known as ad valorem taxes — are determined by the millage rate. One "mill" is equal to \$1 of tax liability for every \$1,000 in assessed property value. The larger the millage rate, the greater the property taxes are for homeowners. Last Tuesday, Town Council voted 5-0 to set the proposed millage rate at 5.7000 mills for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

That decision marks the first of three steps the Town Council takes in setting the millage rate, which determine property taxes for the fiscal year. The proposed millage rate was set at 5.7000 mills last Tuesday. In this upcoming September, the Town Council will set the tentative millage rate and then the final millage rate, which sets the maximum mills for the year. If 5.7000 mills were adopted as the final millage rate this September, for example, a homeowner with a property assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$1,425 before exceptions ($\$250,000 * 5.7000 / 1,000 = \$1,425$).

Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said the 5.7000 mills are needed to balance the budget. "I have been balancing the budget using the 5.7000 mills number we had last year. I was hoping we could be able to lower it, but no, we actually had to trim quite a bit out of our budget this year," **Cambell** said. "I don't recommend you reduce it this year."

Pay raises won by the Police and Fire unions and other salary increases for the town's staff were cited as new increased expenditures for Orange Park.

Last year, Town Council proposed a millage rate of 5.8781 mills, but then lowered it to 5.7000 due to a budget surplus.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
June 6, 2024

Town Council 'paves the way' for sidewalk on Milwaukee Avenue
Jack Randall

The town council voted 4-0 last Tuesday, with Mayor Randy Anderson absent, to finance a sidewalk along Milwaukee Avenue between Plainfield Avenue and Carnes Street.

On June 25, 2019, the council provisioned \$250,000 for the sidewalk spanning Dudley Branch Creek. Five years later, rising and unexpected costs resulted in the lowest bid for that same project to be worth \$1.1 million. "This project has had a long and difficult history," Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said during last Tuesday's meeting. "We set aside about \$250,000 to build this sidewalk. The piece between Plainfield and Carnes — where Dudley Branch crosses — has never had a sidewalk there," **Campbell** said.

Campbell said the goal was to promote pedestrian safety and connectivity. In 2019, bids for the projects came back over double what the council anticipated, about \$538,000. In March of 2023, Orange Park's staff submitted an appropriation request to Florida Rep. Sam Garrison and Florida Sen. Jennifer Bradley. The request was approved, and \$500,000 of state funds were provisioned for the remainder of the project. "But when we bid it out this year... the lowest bid now is \$1.1 million. So, that still leaves us short. But if we get creative, I think there is a way to fund it."

The council approved **Campbell's** plan to use the remaining \$344,670 of unspent ARPA funds from previous projects — since ARPA funds must all be spent by Dec. 31 — and \$150,000 pulled from the general fund.

Because of the terrain, the construction is envisioned to include 390 ft. of elevated boardwalk with 460 ft. of concrete sidewalk. "That is a long run of elevated boardwalk," **Campbell** said. "That's what makes it very complicated. It's not a basic sidewalk."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Sarah Campbell** is listed below.]

<https://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/advocacy-pages/home-rule-heroes>
2024

The Florida League of Cities is recognizing nearly 160 municipal officials with Home Rule Hero Awards for their work during the 2024 legislative session.

Home Rule Hero Award recipients are local government officials, both elected and nonelected, who consistently responded to the League’s request to reach out to members of the legislature and help give a local perspective on an issue. They worked tirelessly throughout the legislative session to promote local voices making local choices, protect the Home Rule powers of Florida’s municipalities and advance the League’s legislative agenda.

“The dedication and effort of these local officials who tirelessly advocated for local decision-making was a difference-maker this legislative session,” said FLC Chief of Legislative Affairs Casey Cook. “On behalf of the League and its legislative team, we’re proud to recognize each of them and thank them for their service.”

Each Home Rule Hero will be presented with their award at a future date.

- **Sarah Campbell**, Town Manager, Town of Orange Park

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
February 1, 2024

'Twelve Angry Residents' from Blake Avenue want their street back
Nearby surgery center clogs street with employee parking

Tammie Taft said she had to make a four-point turn just to get out of her driveway Monday morning to drive to work. Bruce Houck said there are days when he can barely navigate between the line of cars parked on both sides of his quiet street. Others talked about sanitation workers having to park at the end of the street and push containers down the street to the truck because there wasn't enough room to do their jobs. Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said her office received a picture taken by a mailman after he left a note on the side window saying, "You're blocking this person's mailbox. You can't park here. Mailman." The next day, the cars were back.

The standoff between residents of the street and Precision Dermatology & Skin Surgery dates back to 2018, said one of 12 residents of Blake Street who attended a special roundtable meeting Monday night hosted by **Campbell**, Mayor Randy Anderson, Town Attorney Jody Lane Brooks, Police Sgt. Randy Case and Fire Chief John Contestabile. Their anger matched their angst because they said they didn't understand why the surgery center would continue to ignore their concerns. "We are not protected," Houck said. "We are being violated. We've gone to them. We've talked to them."

In fact, Taft said the center called the Orange Park Police Department on her when she pleaded with employees to stop blocking her driveway. **Campbell** said she also talked with employees at the office. Like other residents who've approached the office, her requests to find a solution were ignored. The residents said that Center owner Leonard Dr. Shvartzman, who lives in St. Johns County, told his employees to park in the street so patients could utilize the 27 parking spaces at the office. **Campbell** told residents Monday night the employees weren't violating the town code since it was a public street. "There is not a whole lot we can do legally," Brooks said.

Campbell tried to clarify town ordinances. She said Precision Dermatology & Skin Surgery wasn't in violation. "The requirements for the business are set in the town code, and they're based on the square footage of the building, which they meet," Campbell said. "They have two buildings, and for what they do and the size of their buildings, they are required to have 22 (parking) spaces. They have 27, and so they're exceeding what the code said by five spaces. "But, their business has exceeded that. Clearly, between employees and patients, they have more than 27 vehicles. They are not violating our parking requirements." However, several of the parking spaces aren't being utilized. When Clay Today visited the center on Tuesday, there were 11 open spaces.

Campbell offered several options like creating offset parking spaces and restricting parking on one side of the street. A plan to block the entrance onto Blake Street from Park Avenue and restrict parking to cars with a special decal was also discussed. Anderson listened for more than

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

40 minutes before giving his opinion. What he said had residents cheering and clapping. “I don’t live on Blake, but if I did, I’d be pissed,” he said. “The problem is, they don’t care,” Allen said. “We need to make them care,” Anderson said. The Mayor said he would try to convince the center to be more “respectful” of the neighborhood. “I will talk to the doctor,” he said. Clay Today also left a business card with a receptionist to ask the doctor to return a call. By noon Wednesday, Shvartzman had not responded.

The group vowed to keep fighting to regain control of their street. Case said if any car is 15 feet from a fire hydrant, blocking a driveway in any manner or 20 feet from a crosswalk or intersection, he asked residents to call his department so the car can be ticketed. That was little solace to the group. “They are disrespectful,” Taft said. “They wouldn’t want me to park in front of their house. I don’t want them to be cited. I just want them to be mindful of our community. Right now, they have more rights than we do.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
December 28, 2023

Town of Orange Park, police union tentatively agree to pay raises
By Lee Wardlaw

Ongoing negotiations between the Town of Orange Park and the union representing its police department last Wednesday resulted in both sides moving closer to an agreement.

The Fraternal Order of Police Orange Park Lodge 144 originally wanted an extra \$300,000 for salaries and benefits. The town offered \$160,000. Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said the new request from the union is “somewhere in the middle.” **Campbell** said she would ask the Town Council to approve the tentative agreement of an additional \$240,000 reached between her and the union at their next meeting on Jan. 9. “I believe this is a good solution. It’s a good, middle-of-the-road approach,” **Campbell** said.

After originally favoring a \$160,000 increase, **Campbell** said in light of the town’s budget restraints, she now supports the \$240,000 ask – \$184,000 in salaries and \$56,000 in benefits. The details include across-the-board raises, with lower-paid employees getting a higher percentage increase of around 20%, and higher-paid, longer-tenured employees receiving an approximately 10% increase. “Each employee would receive an increase of about \$7,600 per year to their current salary,” **Campbell** said. If the council approves the proposal, the plan will be presented to the union for ratification. A final vote for approval from the council could happen as soon as its Jan. 23 meeting. “I don’t see any problems on this (vote) (making it to the finish line), as long as council approves the salary proposal,” she said.

Campbell said the new salary structure, particularly starting pay, would make the town competitive with a new contract approved for the Clay County Sheriff’s Office. She said a starting dispatcher’s salary will jump from \$34,700 to \$42,400 a year, while officers will go from \$42,509 to \$50,209. “This gives us a bit of an edge over Clay County. They are a big organization, and they’re still going to have the ability to attract people because of their size, but as far as salary goes, we are going to be very competitive with them,” **Campbell** said.

While the proposed increase is less than the union’s original offer of \$300,000, it represents a compromise that balances the town’s budget constraints with the union’s desire for fair compensation. **Campbell** remained optimistic about the potential outcome, stressing the positive impact the new deal could have on recruiting and retaining officers. “I believe this also increases long-term employees and incentivizes them to stay with our organization, so we can continue to recruit and retain,” she said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/news/regional/florida/jointly-filed-florida-bills-are-proposing-to-prohibit-red-light-cameras-statewide-in-2024/77-c15bad49-b3a8-4a18-8c83-5be98b0951ae>

December 21, 2023

Jointly filed Florida bills propose prohibiting red-light cameras statewide in 2024

Author: Taylor Levesque

Two Florida lawmakers want to get rid of red-light cameras statewide. Florida Republican Senators - Ileana Garcia and David Borrero filed joint resolutions this month which challenges the existing Mark Wandall Traffic Safety Program.

For more than a decade on the First Coast, Orange Park and Green Cove Springs have red-light cameras at intersections. Even though the ban of red-light cameras has been a topic of conversations for years, Orange Park officials say this new legislation hasn't been talked about yet. "Orange Park is a small town, we have less than 10,000 residents," Orange Park Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said. "But, over 80,000 vehicles pass through our community every day on US Highway 17." If the camera catches you, it is a \$158 ticket. Orange Park Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** says red-light cameras have positively changed driver behavior and act as a force multiplier to help police. "The recidivism rate is less than 10 percent," **Campbell** said. "So, we think that once a driver is ticketed, you know, they change their behavior and they don't get ticketed again."

Most cities around the state have gotten rid of red-light cameras which is what a joint resolution proposed by Garcia and Borrero aim to do statewide. Garcia's proposal calls for the removal of red-light cameras except in school speed zones, while Borrero's proposal calls for a ban on red-light cameras everywhere. **Campbell** says Orange Park plans to keep red-light cameras. In January 2023, the town council voted to renew the town's red-light camera contract with Vera Mobility for two more years. "We have good service, good customer service, good support on the technical side," **Campbell** told First Coast News. "So, it's just been a very smooth program for us."

In order for the proposal to move forward, it requires 60% support from the Florida's House of Representatives and Senate to reach the ballot, then 60% of voter support in order to pass a constitutional amendment. "If legislation to ban red-light cameras should make it into law during the next session, there is typically a grace period which might exceed our current contract for red-light camera services. If not, the contract would be voided by the new law," Orange Park Police said in a statement.

First Coast News reached out to both Garcia and Borrero who filed these amendments Wednesday, but did not hear back. Next year's legislative session starts Jan. 9, 2024.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
September 7, 2023

Town Council unanimously approved a resolution to tentatively adopt a reduced millage rate

By Lee Wardlaw

After originally deciding on a millage rate of 5.8781 in July, the Town Council unanimously approved a resolution to tentatively adopt a reduced millage rate of 5.077 during Tuesday night's meeting. The original rate created a higher ceiling to provide more flexibility, but the council determined they could lower it by nearly one mill. The 5-0 vote marked the first time the millage rate was lowered since 2018. The rate will be levied against real and personal property within town limits. Mayor Randy Anderson said there was just over \$35,700 in surplus monies in the town's budget, allowing the millage rate to be lowered.

In other business, the council approved the County Chamber of Commerce to continue to lease Town Hall office space – but at a cost. Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said rental prices in July surged \$1.86 a square foot from last April, according to Economic Summary Reports from the Economic Development Corporation. Winette Sandlin also supported the increase after calculating square footage rates. **Campbell** said the Chamber's rent will result in an annual increase of \$2,790 to meet the standard. The new lease will cost the Chamber \$36,390. They unanimously agreed to amend the Chamber's contract to an 18-month lease that will start on Jan. 1.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News4Jax
September 5, 2023

Clay County cheerleading coach accused of stealing more than \$20,000 from organization
Scott Johnson

A Clay County cheerleading coach is facing grand theft charges for taking thousands of dollars while she ran a cheerleading organization for kids. The Clay County Sheriff's office said she used much of the money as if it were her own bank account. Amanda Herndon used to operate two organizations. She was the president of the Orange Park Athletic Association and she ran a cheerleading group called "Crush Cheer."

The town manager of Orange Park said people started hearing stories that the group was using the facilities at the Orange Park Sports and Recreation Complex. A cease and desist order to the Orange Park Athletic Association was sent in June. It reads in part, "it has come to our attention that Crush Cheer continues to use the facility without a lease from the town or insurance." "Mayor Anderson and I attended one of their board of director meetings in April to advise them of that prohibition, and we were not given an opportunity to speak. It was a very chaotic meeting," Orange Park Town Manager, **Sarah Campbell** said.

Amanda Herndon was removed from her role as president of OPAA. Her arrest warrant shows she was the only member of Crush Cheer with access to the VyStar bank account. When other members of the organization started looking into it, they found Herndon "used the account as if it were her personal bank account." "I felt all kinds of emotions. I felt sadness because we trusted this person and we thought that this person truly cared about our kids," parent Clarissa Mathieu said. Mathieu is the parent of one girl who joined "Crush Cheer." She says parents spent thousands of dollars to put their children in the group. She's outraged over what Herndon is accused of doing. "And I felt anger because cheer season is not cheap. We spend thousands on each season. And the thing is, that with a lot of us, we depend on sponsorship from either family members or local small businesses. And so it's very disheartening," Mathieu said.

"Crush Cheer" is listed as a non-profit and the money given by parents is supposed to go toward uniforms, cheerleading equipment and other similar expenses.

News4JAX reached out to Herndon's lawyer, she had no comment.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
July 27, 2023

Residents: Grant money won't address every problem in Orange Park
Trees, limbs, vegetation could clog flowing water during storms
By Lee Wardlaw

The Town was recently awarded a \$7 million grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Statewide Flooding and Sea Level Resilience Plan for 2023-2024 and it will use it to address four culverts – Plainfield Avenue at Johnson Slough, Nelson Drive at Dudley Branch, Nelson Drive South on Johnson Slough and Carnes Street on Johnson Slough. However, grant monies don't address all concerns of residents living along the waterways. They said there are many factors to consider in the area bordering Doctors Lake prone to flooding during rainstorms.

Chad and Bridgett Dew, a married couple who've lived on Nelson Drive for nine months, and Tyler Jacquin, a longtime resident of the neighborhood that grew up on nearby Birdwood Lane, outlined their concerns for Johnson Slough and Dudley Branch. Their biggest concern is the hundreds of branches, logs and other debris, particularly in Johnson Slough, creating backlogs that prevent water from flowing freely. Another potential issue is leaning trees and branches in the storm-prone area, some showing signs of deterioration or decay. "One of these days, a tree is going to fall and kill a pedestrian. Who is going to be responsible then?" Bridgett Dew asked.

Some trees may pose a risk factor, but the town's Public Works Department has taken all proper measures to address overhanging vegetation, and the town has a healthy financial fund for removing dead trees, said town manager **Sarah Campbell**. Many trees, large and small, lean at an angle on and around Johnson Slough. A group of large branches corrals near Nelson Drive and Plainfield Drive. The towering branches that seemingly interlock don't seem to pose a threat, but it's something for residents to watch in a storm-prone area. According to **Campbell**, the town focuses on trees that are on their property or threaten a power line or structure. "If it's threatening vacant land, it's lower priority," she said.

Croce said that Public Works has a contract with a continuing services company that helps remove dead trees and any tree in danger of falling that could put the community at risk. It will likely be months before work on the culvert work begins, and the infrastructure improvements could take years to complete. A grant must be drafted, approved and finalized. Then the town's engineering consultant must develop a design before it sends it out for bidding. The paperwork process is time-consuming in itself. Work may not begin until 2024. After labor begins, the project's completion could take several years. "For most federal and state grants, (work) could take two to five years," Croce said.

The town of Orange Park and the neighborhood bordering Bradley Park and Doctors Lake wrestle with infrastructure in the historic, established neighborhood defined by beautiful homes surrounded by towering trees and low-lying swamp land. The community must be mindful that

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the Public Works' Stormwater Program only has three full-time employees and is tasked with several other duties. A riverbank stabilization along River Road is ongoing, and the clearing of the creek across from Clarke House Park on the other side of Kingsley Road has been active for six months where erosion was so bad that some swimming pools were threatened, Campbell said.

Meanwhile, other projects are being completed. A list of other infrastructure improvements was listed from the Jones-Edmunds Engineering Firm. A raise of 35 cents a household in Orange Park was also discussed, which would fund the salaries and expenses of the three full-time Stormwater Crew employees through Stormwater Utility Fees. Another hike could allow for two additional. Both items are in the early discussion phase and have not been taken to vote. Decision-makers and taxpayers must consider the price they are paying and the service level they are receiving. "The big issue is that we have a three-man crew for the town. It's really challenging because there needs to be a balance between how much taxpayers spend on stormwater utility fees and the level of service they are getting. It's tough because all of the services cost more money nowadays with inflation. The cost of doing business has increased, so that's a concern for the residents, and the council wants to keep costs low as possible (while also maintaining the best level of service possible)," Croce said.

It's a balancing act. **Campbell** and Croce agree adding two new employees would benefit the town. They also said that once the Johnson Slough Roadways and Culvert Improvements project is completed, it should relieve stress in the flood-prone area. "Plainfield Road is very low, so when the water gets high, there is a sheet flow over the road. The project involves raising the road to an elevation that accommodates sea level rise and creates a larger culvert so that more water can pass under the road," **Campbell** said.

On Nelson Road, the focus is on constructing larger culverts, providing more water capacity to pass underneath the road. There's also the possibility a series of small bridges would be used instead of the culverts, which would be more expensive but would also provide a path for a kayak or canoe to reach Doctors Lake. Remaining dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for the town, totaling \$2 million, which would need to be obligated by 2024 and spent by 2026, may also be allocated to help match funds from the FDEP's Resilience Plan. Upgrades could also end up costing less than \$7 million. If that were the case, the town could allocate the funds to another infrastructure project.

Campbell believes completing the grant project will be a significant step for the town. "I think (the grant project) is going to eliminate a lot of roadway flooding during storms so that people can get in and out of their homes and water can get in and out of the system more easily," she said. The branches, logs and swampy muck is a separate issue and an animal of their own, and some types of major cleanup projects at Johnson Slough and Dudley Branch would need to be passed through the Capital Improvements Plan, which would require an engineering firm to design a plan before moving forward and a contractor to complete the work.

Other areas of Johnson Slough and Dudley Creek are difficult or nearly impossible to access for the Stormwater Crew, and finding specialty equipment to rent isn't easy, either. On the other

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

hand, Croce said that hiring a contractor to complete the job is not allocated in the town's regular operating budget. The swampy area is tricky territory for the town. One piece of equipment has already been tried and failed. Croce said the Mobile Menzie Muck walking excavator sank due in Johnson Slough to the thick layers of mud, debris and growth. Johnson Slough and Dudley Creek are major waterways through the town, and the area is on the Stormwater Crew's regular maintenance schedule and is a top-priority concern. Visiting the sites is also dependent on the accessibility of the affected areas and the priority level at the time compared to other important projects for the town, according to **Campbell**. "We have a schedule to go through Dudley and Johnson yearly and during (hurricane season) to clean out sections as well as we can. Some areas have not been cleaned out because they are difficult to access," Croce said.

Once culvert upgrades are completed, Croce said water would be able to flow more freely, and debris would be able to be more regularly maintained. Clearing debris would provide a positive environmental impact on the area. Among creatures that live in and around the creek include woodpeckers, turtles, otters, beavers, other species of birds, and fish large and small. Crabs and other aquatic fish and animals live nearby in a corridor between a populated suburban neighborhood, a major creek system, Doctors Lake and the St. Johns River. "It would allow for cleaner water, promote the growth of natural Florida vegetation and allow it to survive and thrive. I think it would be a huge environmental benefit to clean those areas of dead debris and exotic, invasive vegetation not native to Florida," he said.

Campbell said Orange Park had already completed \$1 million worth of dredging on Dudley Branch from Kingsley Road to Shaw Street after Hurricane Irma. "We've been working really hard since (Hurricane) Irma in 2017 and made a lot of progress," she said. "Dudley Branch and Johnson Slough need a lot of work. There's more to do," she admitted. "Only time will tell," **Campbell** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
June 22, 2023

Orange Park creates new website to keep up with technical progress

By Lee Wardlaw

The Town Council green-lighted the creation of a new town website during its meeting on Tuesday night. The deadline for the new cloud-based website is Sept. 30.

Before the motion passed unanimously, Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** answered a few questions from council members about the website moving forward. “There are a lot of features in the appendix listed throughout. That, to me, sounds great. I think there are things that are going to be expected by millennials who are more technically savvy than I ever will dream of being, but I’m glad we’re going to have a website that’s going to do that for the future, and hopefully, it will be able to grow with us and change with the times easily,” councilwoman Winnette Sandlin said. Sandlin asked **Campbell** whether there would be additional costs if new features were implemented after the website was completed. **Campbell** said that additional features would each be part of the annual licensing and hosting agreement because the website would be cloud-based. “Everyone gets everything. The only extra expense would be a redesign in a couple of years at your choice,” she said.

Sandlin seemed to like the town manager’s response. “This pleases me because I think there are a lot of things that will let us grow this system to meet our needs as those needs fluctuate and change,” she said.

Councilman Daniel Cobreiro said **Campbell** already answered his question, but he just wanted to make sure that staff would be able to make minor changes and updates to the sites when needed. “My worry with the new developer and the news website was that it was going to be one of those things where they send it off and wait for someone else to put that (information) in,” he said.

Campbell also said those in charge of migrating the current site to the new one will not be in charge of changing any content, correcting any vocabulary, or “making the pages extra fancy.” “Our goal is to be able to train (staff) to be able to update the pages with ease. That’s the process,” she said.

Mayor Randy Anderson wants a user-friendly site. “I have problems with our (current site). I want to look for a park and click on it and get a picture and address of that park,” he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.actionnewsjax.com/news/local/town-orange-park-moves-four-day-work-weeks-certain-employees/TF542JGR5VFOLALMCPO2CFJ5SI/>
May 4, 2023

Town of Orange Park moves to four-day work weeks for certain employees
By Nick Gibson

The Town of Orange Park will now allow some of its employees to work four days a week and have three-day weekends. “Really the goal is employee retention,” **Sarah Campbell** said.

Campbell, who is a Town Manager for Orange Park rolled this plan out a month ago just as a test and quickly realized this is what her employees wanted. “We need to do everything we can to give our employees a lot of flexibility in their work and home life balance. So it was something that we tried out, we gave it a shot for 30 days and most people really enjoyed it,” **Campbell** said.

Campbell says this only applies for employees who work inside of the town’s administrative office and not any other entity associated with town government. “Police and fire employees have their own schedule, as do public works staffers,” **Campbell** said.

According to **Campbell**, the town has split its administrative teams, one blue and one green, by staggering their schedules. They made sure enough staffers are at town hall daily, five days a week. “The Blue team works Monday through Thursday, and the Green team works Tuesday through Friday,” **Campbell** said. **Campbell** also says this allows their town hall to extend hours for residents who need services. “We will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. every day of the week,” **Campbell** said.

We spoke with several people in Orange Park today and everyone including Elaine Pappalardo thinks this is a great idea for the town. “I think that’s a nice perk. When you have a lot of turn over it just cost you more, you lose good talent, and you spend a lot more time training new employees,” **Campbell** said.

Pappalardo says she isn’t sure if every job should move in this direction though, but Victoria Gibson, said otherwise. “It would help out families, and I think personally it would help out people,” Gibson said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
August 17, 2022

Orange Park council opens its 2022-23 budget talks

By Nick Blank

The town of Orange Park started to break down and hash out its next budget during the first of three public meetings. At Monday night's two-hour budget workshop, Town Manager **Sarah Campbell said** the town had about \$15.7 million in revenues. The town's largest projected revenues are ad valorem taxes, which increased from \$3,678,699 in the 2021-2022 fiscal year to \$4,055,769 in the upcoming fiscal year. "Property values increased pretty dramatically countywide," **Campbell said**. "The other revenues are smaller with not much change in those." The American Rescue Plan Act will provide \$2.2 million for the second consecutive and final year. **Campbell said** there are about \$1.4 million in federal funds rolling over.

The commission then heard budget reports from department heads Finance Director John Villanueva and Economic and Community Development Director Stephen Smith.

On the event side, Events Coordinator Emily Dockery said 45,000 people attended the Fall Festival last year. The event raised \$59,882, according to the town. This year's Fall Festival is the 40th and it takes place on Oct. 15-16. "This is how we showcase our town," Mayor Randy Anderson said. The farmer's market events had 15,000 people spread out over 17 dates. Kids Fest, attendance 8,000, finally got a break from the weather, she said. "Everybody was super happy, it was one of the first times we've had the event both days," Dockery said. Inflation presented a challenge, Dockery said. Costs for event-related equipment like porta-potties have increased, but the town lost transportation services to one of its events, which Dockery said stack on one another. "There's a lot of little things like that that add up," Dockery said. Anderson asked about events for adults, including the Longest Table event, which was canceled by inclement weather. "I think we need to budget about \$20,000 for adult events," Anderson said.

Budget and Finance Committee member Winnette Sandlin said when the town spends money it needs to be flexible. Paying attention to trends is important, she said. "We live in an era where the attention span is very short," Sandlin said.

With building permits, **Campbell** showed projections of the town breaking even for the next fiscal year. However, by 2025 the town could see a potential \$57,000 deficit in the fund. **Campbell said** the town has to be competitive with other local entities, but also must cover costs for the particular funds. "The permit costs need to be increased to break even every year," she said.

Council members noted the small size of each department and thanked town staff for a thorough process. The next two budget meetings are at 6 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 22, and Wednesday, Aug. 24.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
August 3, 2022

Rising gas prices challenge government, education budgets
Orange Park faces 38% increase in gas spending if trend persists
By Faith Buckley

Dog Days have rolled into Clay County with an unexpected partner this summer. In May and June, Clay County saw a rapid influx in gas prices, and towns sprinkled across the county quickly adjusted to a new reality. “Obviously, there’s a budgetary impact,” Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook said. “Understanding the volatile world that we live in and knowing that gas is a must-have, for our agency, we budgeted a higher per-gallon rate.” Clay County allocated \$2,123,486 of its 2021-2022 fiscal budget toward equipment and vehicles for the sheriff’s office, which was calculated based on the highest gas rates in the last 10 years. Cook said current gas prices are not heavily impacting the sheriff’s office’s day-to-day work, but she’s skeptical of the outcome if the prices affect the supply chain.

Annaleasa Winter, public information officer for Clay County, said about 22% of the fiscal 2021-2022 Clay County budget funds transportation. The county allocated extra funding for fuel in this year’s budget with the anticipation that gas prices would rise from the fiscal year 2020-2021. Despite the increase in gas price, contract lawn mowing and internal staff operations for Public Works and Clay County Parks have not been affected. All emergency calls will receive first responders, and the level of service the Public Safety Department provides for Clay County will remain untouched, Winter said.

Sarah Campbell, town manager for Orange Park, said this year’s city gas prices mark the highest she’s seen in her four years in office. **Campbell** ensures the six department heads of the town — police chief, fire chief, public works director, finance director economic and community director and town clerk — implement and carry out policies developed by the town’s council. She said Orange Park holds a cooperative fuel agreement with agencies like the Clay County School District and the City of Green Cove Springs to reduce fuel prices.

The town of Orange Park spent \$140,000 on gas and diesel costs so far in fiscal 2022 in comparison to \$196,000 for all fiscal 2021. If gas prices remain as high as they are, it’ll be a 38% increase in spending last year, **Campbell** said. “The whole economic situation is frustrating right now,” she said. “It’s a challenging time for everything that we’re trying to buy right now.” The council allocates 1% of the town’s budget toward a contingency fund annually to use for backup. The public works and fire departments are nearing the end of their fuel budgets, **Campbell** said. The public works department includes the wastewater system, public parks, street construction and lawn services. “We can’t cut back in any way if 9-1-1 rings,” she said. “We answer it, so the ambulance has to run.”

Heather Sullivan, 30, has been a Keystone Heights for eight years and said the highest gas price she’s seen in Florida was \$4.93 in recent months. Sullivan said inflation isn’t to blame, but the

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

companies ought to be. “The barrel prices haven’t changed that much since last year, so it can only be the companies being greedy,” she said. “It’s insane.” Sullivan commutes 25 minutes to her work as a diesel mechanic every day and said the drive is unavoidable. “I think where I work most people bite the bullet and just go by themselves because we're so spread everywhere,” she said. She said her daughter has gone into small debt with the rise of gas prices despite limiting travel and carpooling, and Sullivan’s had to help her daughter out. Sullivan hasn’t seen her family in Lake County in four to five months since the quick raise in gas prices and has limited visits on holidays. She could not comment on if the gas prices were tied to political matters.

Recreational gas prices have since lowered in Clay County and are on a continuous decline. “Florida drivers are finally catching a break after several weeks of rising gas prices,” said AAA Spokesman Mark Jenkins.

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Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Sarah Campbell** is listed below.]

https://issuu.com/flcities/docs/qc_2022_q2/s/15338330
2022 - 2nd quarter

Female City Managers share rough spots and rewards

By Joy Dickinson

International Women’s Day was celebrated on March 8. In recognition of women’s important and growing role in local government, Quality Cities interviewed five female City Managers who share an insider’s look at their roles. They discuss what they’ve learned from the women who mentored them and the lessons they’re passing on to others.

The City Managers shared many common concerns and were upfront about the difficulties of the job. Many expressed the need for work-life balance. They also spoke enthusiastically about their satisfaction in working with residents and seeing an idea turn into a completed project. Some spoke about the fulfillment that comes from working for a greater purpose. One City Manager quoted Steve Jobs, Co-Founder of Apple, as saying, “Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do.”

SARAH CAMPBELL, TOWN OF ORANGE PARK

Sarah Campbell, Town Manager for the Town of Orange Park, loves that her job allows her to see long-term projects come to fruition. **Campbell** enjoys the satisfaction that comes with the completion of projects in a five-year capital plan, such as a new playground, road reconstruction or a waterfront park acquisition. “Redevelopment also fits into that category,” she said. “It takes a long time to eliminate blighted structures and replace them with thriving businesses that are good for the community.”

Campbell acknowledges that the job also has its difficulties, especially in the current national climate in which people distrust government. “It is hard to combat the negativity, especially when the data does not support the distrust.” **Campbell** said she has learned to remove her emotional responses to situations as they happen. “Keeping a calm demeanor, listening first, responding slowly and with a professional answer is a learned habit,” she said. If you respond with anger, frustration or hurt, the focus turns to the person instead of the issue, **Campbell** said. “My goal is to respond with grace. And vent later.”

Physical and emotional health must be a priority in order to stay in this profession long-term, she said. Also, **Campbell** now sets boundaries for responses after normal business hours. She’s found a creative way to address meetings with residents when they are particularly challenging. “I use my digital notepad to write myself positive messages like ‘breathe,’ ‘peace’ or ‘this too shall pass.’ Sometimes I fill a whole page!”

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Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.claytodayonline.com/stories/orange-park-narrowly-approves-pay-raise-for-town-manager,32996>
February 2, 2022

Orange Park narrowly approves pay raise for Town Manager
By Nick Blank

The Town of Orange Park approved a 3% cost of living raise for its town manager with a 3-2 vote at Tuesday night's board meeting. When council members met Jan. 18, the scores of Town Manager **Sarah Campbell**'s evaluation were present in the agenda, but the written portion wasn't. Council Member Susana Thompson requested the written portion and said a raise is usually discussed after an evaluation, which in this case covered Oct. 1, 2020 to Sept. 30, 2021.

The town manager was graded on eight categories, including fiscal management, policy execution, staffing and citizen relations, out of a possible five. First up, Council Member Alan Watt gave **Campbell** an average score of five. He said the town has a highly respected staff and the best in North Florida. "She's more than earned it in the past two years," he said.

Councilmember Eddie Henley gave **Campbell** an average of 4.8 and Mayor Randy Anderson's average was 4.6. Henley said **Campbell** made being a council member tolerable and the education she provided was top-notch. He said **Campbell** was the CEO of Orange Park who makes sure every town event is ready. Anderson added the town pays high for high-quality work. "We have the best of all of them," Anderson said. Councilmember John Hauber, who provided an average score of 3.8, mentioned that **Campbell** also serves as the town's Human Resources director. He said he'll continue to push to examine town policies, but the town manager has done a remarkable job.

Campbell said the town did not get approval to post an HR director position. Anderson and other council members said the town saved about \$40,000 by **Campbell** doing two jobs. According to **Campbell**, she makes an estimated \$122,387 a year with a vehicle stipend of \$200 a month, and \$50 a month for a phone stipend.

From her own research, Thompson said the figure was high compared to other city or town managers. Thompson gave an average score of 2.2. Her written portion included more than 20 items critical of **Campbell**'s performance. She praised **Campbell**'s strengths with the budget, but shot down the idea of a raise, citing the town's duty to be fiscally responsible. "We're in Florida. We're not in San Francisco; we're not in New York," Thompson said. "I need to also think about what our town residents are paying from their pockets when they're paying their taxes. I need to consider everything."

Council members were polled of the 3% raise vote shortly after and it was approved, with Thompson and Anderson voting against.

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Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
October 21, 2021

OP Council passes lift station contract, flood zone home purchase offers

By Nick Blank

The Orange Park Town Council approved a contract for lift station improvements and to submit offers for two homes in a flood zone through a federal program at Tuesday night's meeting. Council members unanimously approved a \$525,000 contract with Jacksonville-based PBM Contractors for improvements at the Dogwood Lane Pump station. PBM Contractors had the lowest bid of the five bids submitted. The station is near the intersection of Milwaukee Avenue and Dogwood Lane. The improvements call for replacing electrical service and pump controls, installing a new sewer line and manhole and altering the fence line and concrete.

When Council Member Susana Thompson asked about the impact to residents in the immediate area, Public Works Director Kyle Croce said town staff would do their best to provide access to residents at all times. He said the timeframe of the project is up to 180 days and residents shouldn't observe a substantial change during construction, but they would receive notice if that was the case. "It's a big project so there's going to be a lot of construction," Croce said. "It's a full rehab of the wet well and the lift station, so there's going to be a lot of work out there, but as always we'll try to minimize any disruption."

The Town Council also approved submitting offers, using Community Development Block Grant voluntary housing buyback program funds, to purchase two Winfred Drive homes for \$347,122 and \$321,884. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and administered by the state. If the homes are acquired, the town will demolish OP Council passes lift station contract, flood zone home purchase offers the homes and the properties will be used as conservation areas due to the properties being in a flood zone. For the homeowners, the program is voluntary until the property closes, according to town documents.

Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said the state Department of Economic Opportunity advised the town and other entities to pay the current appraised home value rather than the value before Hurricane Irma struck. **Campbell** said an agreement with HUD will be brought before council members at a future meeting. "[The FDEO] called a special meeting of all the grant recipients in the state to make the announcement that they were applying for a major amendment to HUD to offer the current appraised value instead of the prestorm value," **Campbell** said. "So, that has been identified by FDEO as a change in the program, so that's how we've proceeded is offering the current market value." **Campbell** said the demolition costs are included in the grant. If they exceed \$25,000, it will go before council members. Mayor Randy Anderson also asked **Campbell** if parts of the homes could be donated to local organizations. "If there's anything salvageable in the home, we could remove it or ask them to remove anything they would find helpful," **Campbell** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Clay Today
April 21, 2021

Orange Park town manager asks Town Council to approve her recommendation to fire Chief Alvin Barker
By Wesley LeBlanc

Town manager **Sarah Campbell** told the Orange Park Town Council it should fire Chief Alvin Barker. That came Tuesday night after Barker refused **Campbell's** request for his resignation following three apparent incidents the town manager said broke the town's No. 1 core value of integrity. Barker is unwilling to resign, and he's prepared to fight back, according to his attorney, Paul Donnelly. "Barker is a long-term public servant," Donnelly said. "He has worked for 33 years in Northeast Florida and in that entire time in his professional life, he's never been subject to any kind of material or inverse, adverse discipline. He's a fantastic town fire chief...and has been for over half a decade...and looks forward to continuing for many years."

Donnelly claimed Barker had been fired for being a whistleblower over an "illegal town bank account." Donnelly said that after he allegedly pointed out to **Campbell** the bank account in question was illegal, he was asked to resign a couple of days later. Donnelly also said complaints deemed meritless by outside investigators that cost the town \$18,000 were being used to justify his firing. Donnelly said those claims shouldn't affect his professional career. The meritless complaints were calls for harassment and unfair targeting by Barker to subordinates, but Donnelly said the complaints were made because of "disgruntled employees." **Campbell** said the employees in question weren't at the meeting to represent themselves. As a result, Clay Today opted not to include their names. He said one of the main "disgruntled employees" had applied for Barker's Fire Chief job, which is currently being advertised. That person was being considered for the position, something **Campbell** later said wasn't true.

Donnelly's argument during the meeting centered around he and Barker's claim that **Campbell** "attempted to entrap Barker by asking him to take control of an illegal town [bank] account." And allegedly, because Barker refused because it violates law, he was asked to resign. He was given a settlement offer that required Barker to waive his rights and his position as the fire chief. Donnelly said by signing, Barker would have waived his ability to pursue legal remedies under the Florida Whistleblower laws.

Town Attorney Rob Bradley stopped Donnelly a couple of times throughout the presentation to explain that his silence during Donnelly's presentation did not mean he agreed with him. Bradley said he disagreed with much of what Donnelly said in regards to law, especially in regards to the Florida Firefighter Bill of Rights, which Donnelly claimed Barker was protected. Bradley, however, said that because Barker's position was more administrative than anything else, he was not protected under that bill of rights.

When **Campbell** spoke, she said many of Donnelly's claims were false. She also said the item on the agenda, which was asking the Town Council to vote on **Campbell's** recommendation had

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

nothing to do with the “illegal bank account” – something she said wasn’t illegal. Bradley said the “illegal bank account” was propped up as dramatic moment, but that in reality, it has nothing to do with **Campbell**’s resignation request. “The town accountant came to me with a bank statement and asked if I knew about it and I did not,” she said during the meeting. “But that’s not illegal. It was for the Explorer Posts [which has to do with a local Boy Scouts of America troop]. It was a bank account created before I was the town manager.”

Campbell said the town’s finance department asked her to find out about the account and she was informed one of the fire department employees was the only signee on the account. Donnelly and Barker argued that this was not okay, and Barker should have at least been on the account if it was an account under the fire department’s jurisdiction. **Campbell** said when she saw that employee’s name on the account, she immediately knew it was for the Explorer Post and it was set up for the explorers to buy food and gas when they travel for competitions. The leadership of the town at that point thought it was appropriate for that to be a separate bank account, **Campbell** said. After learning of this, **Campbell** spoke to Barker and asked if it should remain a separate account or a town account and Barker told **Campbell** that it should be a town account, she said. She contacted the signee and they turned in the funds from the account to the town’s finance department in the form of a check. “It was really a non-issue and really an administrative issue,” **Campbell** said. “The account was closed and the funds were turned over to the town. Explorers is a protected account under the town’s budget for the fire department.”

Campbell said it’s three incidents leading to Barker’s potential firing. She said Barker tasked one of his employees in question with reviewing and editing a department policy and that this employee spent an entire day working on it. This policy was about chain of command, which sees employees with complaints, questions or concerns going through multiple chains of command before reaching **Campbell**. “After the policy was issued, Barker contacted [another employee in the fire department that was the subordinate of the employee Barker had review and edit the policy procedure] and asked if anyone was complaining about the policy,” **Campbell** said. “Barker then says he was just messing with [the employee that reviewed and edited the policy] and that it was a joke.” **Campbell** said the employee was very upset to learn it was a joke and a prank. He didn’t find it funny and he didn’t think it was a joke, she said. He thought it was inappropriate and he thought his supervisor [Barker] had gone behind his back to talk to a subordinate privately, which broke the policy he had just reviewed and edited.

Campbell said Barker denied that this “joke” incident had ever occurred so she contacted the people involved again to double check and she said she has reason to believe that all of it occurred and that Barker denying it ever happened was a show of extreme “dishonesty.” “I believed [their testimonies] to be accurate...as they had no reason to fabricate the story against Barker,” **Campbell** said, explaining how the person Barker told it was a joke to was friends with Barker and wouldn’t make up a story to get him in trouble. “To me, that was the final straw and when it was a question of dishonesty, he couldn’t be honest and own up to his actions.”

Campbell said it was the third incident that demonstrated dishonesty that led to her asking him to resign. “It’s not something I take lightly,” she said. I’ve handled the town’s [human resources]

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

for a number of years. We have to do it with compassion and integrity, but you've charged us with a certain set of rules. The town's code has been violated. Our number one core value is integrity, so when I believe a department head has lied to me on three occasions in rapid succession, I no longer trust him to be on the leadership team. He was given the opportunity to resign and he denied that opportunity so here we are today."

The council and everyone in the room was somewhat taken by surprise at everything that played out that night. They were supposed to either vote yes to approve **Campbell's** recommendation to fire Barker or no to reject her recommendation. The majority of the council felt that it needed more time to make this decision, and perhaps more importantly, they wanted more of the information about everything argued during the meeting. They voted 3-2, with mayor Alan Watt and council member Virginia Hall voting no, to table the item.

A special meeting will be held next week to discuss in more detail this potential firing. Bradley recommended the council make a decision sooner rather than later as it's an important nobody should be left in limbo, especially considering that the possibility for litigation.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Firstcoastnews.com
August 11, 2020

'We are tired:' Orange Park residents want solution to flooding problem

Author: Ken Amaro

When it rains, it floods for several properties at the end of Loring Village Court in Orange Park. "It just fills up fast," said resident Alan Gentry. Loring Village Court is a neighborhood of duplex homes. "To say we have been patient is an understatement," said resident Bill Wagner.

Both Wagner and Gentry have watched their property completely flood, front and back, after a common Florida thunderstorm during the summer. "It is like a river coming through here every time it rains," said Gentry. And every time it happens, they fear it will flood their homes as it did during Hurricane Irma. They say they've complained to the Town of Orange Park about the flooding problem for a decade, but nothing has been done. "All all these many years we have been saying you have to do something," said Wagner. He has a folder with scores of emails to show the back and forth communication. But their properties were flooded again Monday night. "Ten years of it and it is getting worse," said Gentry.

Where is the water coming from? They say the stormwater drainage system near Ash Street and Plainfield Avenue has failed to control or contain the runoff. "Part of what needs to be done is they need to look at Ash Street," said Wagner.

What's the solution? **Sarah Campbell**, the Orange Park Town Manager, told On Your Side: "It appears private property is the issue. There are no ditches, no easements that we can clean. The town is working with the landowners to come up with a solution but it is a lengthy process." **Campbell** said if the Ash Street drainage system is a contributing factor, it would need to be redesigned and that also takes time and money.

Both Wagner and Gentry have heard some of the excuses before and unfortunately, it has left them feeling trapped between the bureaucracy and the forces of nature. "We are looking for answers. We are looking for someone that says okay we found the problem and we are going to fix it.," said Wagner.

Campbell said Orange Park has been aggressive addressing flooding concerns since Hurricane Irma. She said the town is in the process of buying out 18 property owners whose homes have flooded repeatedly. About \$3 million in a federal grant is being used for the buyout. As for this community, she said they are looking for a solution, but at this present time, they do not have an immediate solution.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

claytodayonline.com
December 20, 2018

Second water review for Orange Park

Author: Wesley LeBlanc

The Orange Park Town Council approved a motion a few weeks ago to hold a second wastewater study, this time to focus on system capacity. “The second piece [second stormwater review] is more about capacity and potential improvements, where we study the system and say, ‘Does the system we have meet our needs?’,” said Town Manager **Sarah Campbell**. “Is it big enough? Is it deep enough? Does it handle enough water?”

This review will cost the town \$123,510, which will come from the \$500,000 budgeted for stormwater maintenance and review, and will focus on the town’s stormwater capacity. When the first review came back in October, **Campbell** presented the findings and called them eye-opening. “The assessment was conducted and has identified that amount of maintenance we need to be doing on an annual basis, and frankly the amount of capital replacement on your assets that you will need to be doing on an annual basis is really eye-opening,” **Campbell** said. The review identified roughly \$15 million worth of stormwater pipe – 129,000 feet of it – that will need to be replaced one day.

It also found that 1,165 stormwater structures will one day need to be replaced, which will cost Orange Park an estimated \$5.1 million. The first stormwater review focused more on addressing structural needs. During the Dec. 4 Orange Park Town Council meeting, the council approved a motion with a 5-0 vote to move forward with another review. This review, which will be also completed by the Jacksonville office of engineering consultant firm Jones Edmunds, was funded in the Capital Improvement Plan for this fiscal year. As such, when it came time for council discussion, there wasn’t much discussion other than a general agreement that the review was needed.

Following the brief presentation by **Campbell**, the council approved a motion with a 5-0 vote to hire Jones Edmunds to complete the stormwater capacity review. According to **Campbell**, though, the council and residents alike shouldn’t expect to hear much for a while. “This is going to take quite a while,” **Campbell** said. “How long exactly, we don’t really know, but it is a very large study.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

104.5WOKV
March 28, 2018

Safety issues raised after Orange Park's only ambulance removed

By Christy Turner

An ambulance is no longer stationed in the Town of Orange Park after a vote by the Clay County Board of County Commissioners. The Orange Park Fire Department serves about 8,600 residents. On Tuesday, the Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously to remove Rescue 19 from Station 19 in Orange Park. For now, patients within town limits will be transported by ambulances from Clay County fire stations.

Orange Park Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said this will impact the response times for emergencies. She said engines from Station 19 responded to a crash in four minutes, but victims had to wait 13 minutes for the ambulance to arrive from a fire station much farther away. "That's a problem when you need to go to the hospital quickly," **Campbell** said.

Campbell said the town is seeking to buy its own ambulance, but under state law, it needs approval from the county first. The town is in the process of applying for a certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN), which would allow it to have its own ambulance system. However, the timeline for the application process is unknown. "We still have to go through that application process and this could be a permanent state of affairs for our residents, unfortunately," **Campbell** said. The Town Council is holding a special meeting on this issue Thursday night at 5:30 in Orange Park Town Hall. Residents are urged to attend to voice their opinion.

The Clay County Department of Public Safety has issued the following statement about the removal of the ambulance, which largely seemed to center around budgetary concerns voiced by the Town of Orange Park:

"The provision of Advanced Life Support (ALS) Emergency Medical response and transport services in Clay County is a county-wide service delegated by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) to Clay County Fire/Rescue. In support of this mission the County operates 10 full time and 1 part-time ALS Transport Rescue Units along with 13 ALS Paramedic Engine/Ladder Companies. One of the County Rescue Units and one ALS Paramedic Engine Company have been staffed on behalf of the County by the Orange Park Fire Department (OPFD) who has been a valuable partner in that process.

Since 2014, in cooperation with the leadership of the OPFD, the County adopted a response philosophy that strives to ensure that the closest appropriate unit(s) for each emergency is immediately dispatched, regardless of area or jurisdiction. This response ensures not only the most effective available response for each call for service, but also provides the continual protection of our communities through the dynamic repositioning of other unit(s) to lend support should one or more calls occur at the same time. In recent months, the Town of Orange Park's leadership has expressed concerns regarding the frequency and utilization of the OPFD staffed

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

County Rescue Unit and OPFD fire assets outside the Town's limits, as well as an asserted financial burden that the cost of staffing the County Rescue Unit places on their budget. It culminated with a request from the Town for the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) for the grant of a separate Town operated rescue service.

The BCC, in initially responding to the Town's request, took two actions at their March 27th meeting. First, they directed staff to prepare and present a process in order to appropriately hear, consider and render a response to the COPCN request. Secondly, in order to provide immediate budgetary relief to the Town, as well as free their fire department employees of the obligation to staff the County's Rescue Unit so that the staff is fully available to better meet the Town's first response EMS and fire service needs, the BCC directed the County Manager and County Fire Chief to assume the staffing responsibility of the Rescue Unit with County Fire/Rescue staff, until the matter of the COPCN request is resolved.

In taking this action, the BCC affirmed that the County's EMS service must be managed as a County-wide operation whose ultimate responsibility is to protect the safety and well-being of all Clay County residents – including Orange Park. Additionally, this action emphasizes the BCC's belief the service model that presently exists continues to be the most collaborative, efficient and cost-effective means to provide these vital services to our citizens."

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Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Orange Park Living
February, 2018

Meet your new town manager:

Author: unknown

Ms. **Campbell** was named Town Manager on August 9, 2017. Ms. **Campbell** began working for the Town in 2008 . She was appointed Town Clerk in March, 2009 and named Assistant Town Manager in November, 2015. She was previously employed as a legal assistant with the Orange Park law firm of Kopelousos & Bradley, P.A. She obtained designation as a Certified Municipal Clerk from the International Institute for Municipal Clerks in April of 2012.

Ms. **Campbell** holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Architectural Studies from the University of Nebraska and a Master of Public Administration Degree from the University of North Florida. She is a member of the Florida Association of City Clerks and the Florida City and County Management Association.

She and her husband, Bryan, and their two children have lived in Clay County since 2002. They recently welcomed their first grandson.

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Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
September 25, 2017

Clay residents working to recover from widespread hurricane damage

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

Clay County authorities predict a long recovery process for many residents whose homes were destroyed or damaged by storm surge flooding and high winds produced by Hurricane Irma as it roared over Northeast Florida leaving countless shattered lives in its wake. A snapshot of the extensive damage showed no section of the county escaped unscathed. Damage assessments and cleanup are ongoing. Residents of two Orange Park condominium complexes on the St. Johns River won't be going home anytime soon.

Orange Park firefighters waded through chest-deep water, and used ladders to evacuate some second-floor residents trapped at River Oak, 2099 Winterbourne, and The Villas Continental and Yacht Club, 2223 Astor St., when storm surge sent the river flooding into both condominium communities. Orange Park Fire Chief Alvin Barker said 24 condo units in one building at River Oak, as well as a total of 16 to 24 units in two buildings at The Villas, sustained severe foundation and other apparent structural damage from the river storm surge making them unsafe for now. "We had everyone move out because the structure is unstable," Barker said. They would not be allowed back until a structural engineer clears it as safe. Barker also said firefighters initially were hampered by downed live power lines that posed a potential risk of electrocution to the first responders as well as residents.

Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said many areas flooded in the town. Water got into at least five homes – not counting the riverfront condominium complexes – a couple of cars and the town's Public Works Department building. There also were a lot of downed trees, and power lines. By Monday, electricity had been restored to all the facilities that could have it restored, **Campbell** said. A public works employee was hospitalized for injuries he sustained when his town truck was T-boned by private vehicle at the intersection of Plainfield and Kingsley avenues, she said.

Residents along the North Prong and South Prong of Black Creek were among the hardest hit. Since the hurricane passed they've been cleaning up almost non-stop from the record flood waters. Piles of water-logged foul-smelling muddy furniture, appliances, bedding, toys and flotsam lined the sides of streets and roads as Black Creek residents raced to strip their homes down to the studs to prevent mold. County officials previously estimated at least 1,200 homes sat amid the broad swath cut by Black Creek flood waters.

Most of the damage in Keystone Heights in southern Clay County involved downed trees and power lines, but at least one home flooded with about a foot of water, City Manager Scott Kornegay said Monday. "We had a very large debris field. We've got these 100-year-old oak trees down here," said Kornegay, explaining trees toppled like twigs to block roadways and cut-off homes. Cleanup began last Monday and is well underway. Power has been restored to all

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residents, he said. Green Cove Springs also sustained street flooding, downed trees and power outages, city officials said.

As residents recover from the storm, the Northeast Florida Builders Association is urging people affected by the hurricane to remain alert for unlicensed contractors, and dishonest people posing as licensed contractors. Be on the lookout for unlicensed contractors, especially door-to-door solicitors requiring large sums of money up front. Licensed contractors will gladly show proof of insurance and licensure, and their license can be verified with the state. They should never ask for large deposits up front, according to the association.

The association is a member of the Disaster Contractors Network, which encourages homeowners to follow the following safety precautions. Obtain at least three estimates from licensed and bonded contractors.

Get the estimate in writing,
Ask for and check references,
Ask for proof of insurance,
Get a written contract

Make sure all work that requires city or county inspection is officially approved in writing before final payment is made.

To verify a contractor's license, contact the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) at (850) 487-1395, or www.myfloridalicense.com.

To report unlicensed activity, contact DBPR at 866.532.1440. In addition, homeowners can report price gouging at (866) 9NO-SCAM, association officials said.

People who want to volunteer to help can call Clay Safety Net at (904) 644-0311.

Residents who sustained losses in the county can apply for help by registering online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov.

Disaster Assistance Insurance Helpline: 1 (800) 22-STORM

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Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
September 7, 2017

Orange Park close to allowing marijuana dispensaries

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

The town is one step closer to allowing medical marijuana dispensaries to open in the municipality. Town Council, voting unanimously Tuesday night, passed on first reading a proposed ordinance authorizing marijuana dispensaries and treatment centers under certain restrictions in some commercial zoning districts. Council will hold a second reading and public hearing, then take a final vote at its 7 p.m. Oct. 3 regular meeting at Town Hall, 2042 Park Ave., Orange Park, Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said Wednesday. If enacted, Orange Park becomes the first, and possibly only, community in Clay County to allow the dispensaries.

Under Florida law, medical marijuana dispensaries must be treated as regular pharmacies for zoning purposes. That means wherever a regular pharmacy is allowed to operate, so, too, is a medical marijuana dispensary. Pharmacies, including marijuana dispensaries, also would be banned from commercial neighborhood zoning districts, which typically include convenience stores and office space. Orange Park's proposed ordinance would restrict the dispensaries to commercial general, commercial intensive and planned unit development districts. They would be barred from locating within 500 feet of a school, or another pharmacy/dispensary

The Legislature in June approved medical marijuana regulations, but it's up to counties and municipalities to decide whether to ban the dispensaries, or allow them under conditions. Florida health officials already have approved at least 12 medical marijuana operations statewide.

The Green Cove Springs City Council voted unanimously in August to extend for six months the city's temporary moratorium on medical marijuana dispensaries, which would have expired Nov. 15. Council members said they wanted to study the issue a bit longer, though several favor banning marijuana dispensaries in the city.

The Clay County Commission last year imposed a temporary moratorium, which only covers unincorporated areas, set to expire Jan. 24. The County Commission as yet hasn't said when it will decide whether to allow the dispensaries.

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Sarah Campbell
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Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
August 9, 2017

Orange Park promotes Sarah Campbell to town manager

Author: Teresa Stepzinski

Town Council voting unanimously promoted **Sarah Campbell** to town manager Wednesday night. A longtime town employee, **Campbell** currently serves simultaneously as assistant town manager and town clerk. **Campbell**, 42, will receive \$110,000 annual salary effective Sept. 22 when she begins her tenure as town manager. She succeeds Town Manager Jim Hanson, who is retiring effective Sept. 22 after three years overseeing this northern Clay County municipality. Hanson, 63, earns \$117,700 a year. **Campbell** previously has served twice as interim town manager under separate administrations. When Hanson was hired as town manager, **Campbell** had been the council's second choice. This time **Campbell** was the council's first and only choice.

The council, offered **Campbell** the job Aug. 3 – two days after Hanson announced his retirement – in an unanimous vote. Wednesday's unanimous approval of her contract further reflected the council's confidence in her, Mayor Scott Land said after the 20 minute special meeting. "She's worked hard. She deserves it. She's put a lot of time and effort into becoming town manager. She's dedicated a lot of time to the town," said Land, noting **Campbell** had taken on extra responsibilities over the year such as organizing the town's popular Fall Festival.

Because of a prior family commitment, **Campbell** didn't attend the meeting. However, she told the Times-Union earlier that she was excited by the prospect of continuing to work with town leaders and employees, and the community. "I like the community and I like the team that we've put together here on the staff. And I think we have enormous potential, and I think our council is aligning with that so it seemed like a good time," **Campbell** said.

Campbell said her immediate goal is to continue carrying out the strategic plan the council already has identified for the town this year. Coinciding with that priority is carrying out the town's "rigorous capital improvement schedule," **Campbell** said. She as well as town leaders expect "a very, very smooth transition for everybody." Hanson is staying on to help complete work on the town budget.

Although a finalist for Atlantic Beach city manager, **Campbell** said her heart is in Orange Park although she was honored to be considered for the other position. **Campbell** had applied for the Atlantic Beach job in March. At that time, the Orange Park opportunity didn't exist. Hanson notified Town Council of his retirement at its Aug. 1 meeting. She has worked for the town since 2008. **Campbell** was appointed town clerk in March, 2009, then named assistant town manager in November 2015. She obtained designation as a certified municipal clerk from the International Institute for Municipal Clerks in April 2012.

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Campbell earned a master of public administration degree from the University of North Florida, as well as a bachelor of science degree in architectural studies from the University of Nebraska. She is a member of the Florida Association of City Clerks and the Florida City and County Management Association. She previously worked as a legal assistant with the Orange Park law firm of Kopelousos & Bradley, which is now Kopelousos, Bradley & Garrison. When **Campbell** worked for the firm, Sam Garrison was not there. Garrison now serves as town attorney.

Campbell and her husband, Bryan, have two children. They have lived in Clay County since 2002. When they first drove into the community 15 years ago, they knew it was where they wanted to be, she said. The Orange Park job "is going to be great for me and my family," **Campbell** said.

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Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
March 27, 2017

Orange Park voters to decide 3 charter amendments

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

Town voters next month will decide three proposed amendments intended to update and streamline the Orange Park charter regarding future elections, as well as elect candidates to two seats on the Town Council. The April 11 town election is part of Clay County's Municipal Super Tuesday balloting. Orange Park voters can cast their ballots from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. that day at Town Hall, 2042 Park Ave., which is the sole voting precinct for its municipal election. About 600 absentee ballots were sent out as of March 17 for the upcoming election, Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said. That's a lot, said **Campbell** attributing the voter interest to the fact the town has contested council races. Running for Orange Park Council Seat 1 are Eddie B. Henley Sr., Larry M. Nichols and Ron Raymond. The Council Seat 2 candidates are incumbent Eugene Nix and challenger Alan N. Watt. Council seats are nonpartisan, and the winner receives a three-year term. Whoever wins will be sworn in May 16.

All three proposed charter amendments relate to town elections. The measures were rooted in the Municipal Super Tuesday election process, which aligned all the cities and towns in Clay County to the same election date, **Campbell** said. "We realized there were little nuances in our charter that prevented us from being completely streamlined," **Campbell** said of the need to update the charter.

Charter Amendment No. 1 would adopt the Florida Election Code and authorized the Clay County Supervisor of Elections to assume extra duties regarding the town's election. The town currently contracts the county Supervisor of Elections Office to handle election day activity. However, the town handles candidate qualifying in accordance with the charter, **Campbell** said. "They are focused 365 days of the year on running elections that meet Florida election laws," she said. Currently, **Campbell** oversees town elections – roughly six weeks a year – as part of her town clerk duties. "So, they have a level of expertise and training that you don't often get at the local level." She said amending the charter will allow the professional staff of the Supervisor of Elections Office to handle more of the town's election process, therefore freeing up town staff time to focus on other duties. "It eliminates the need for us to have our own set of election rules because frankly, the ones that we have in place right now fall short. They are not nearly as robust as they need to be. There are a lot of gaps. There is a lot of 'well, our charter doesn't address how to handle this situation'," she said. The amendment updates the charter to plug the gaps. For example, **Campbell** said currently forms that candidates need to complete aren't addressed, neither is the makeup of the town Canvassing Board. The amendment would ensure those and other aspects of town election activity will conform with the state Election Code, and remain current with necessary updates, she said.

Charter Amendment No. 2 would allow more time for candidate qualifying if there is a Town Council vacancy. Currently, the charter states if there is a vacancy on the council within 45 days

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of an election, the vacancy must be placed on that ballot. However, by that point, the election process is well underway. **Campbell** said the 45 days doesn't allow enough time to place the candidate's name on the ballot, and mail out overseas military or absentee ballots. The proposed amendment would change the cutoff to 75 days before an election to fill the council vacancy, she said. "It really aligns it with candidate qualifying," she said.

Charter Amendment No. 3 would increase the time between a regular election and a runoff election. Currently, the charter requires a runoff election be held one week after the regular election in the event of a tie vote in that balloting. **Campbell** said that doesn't allow enough time to get new ballots prepared and mailed to overseas military or absentee voters. The amendment would eliminate the one-week mandate, and would eliminate the mandate for a second runoff election if there is another tie vote, she said. "We need a bigger window to have a runoff election, she said. If approved, the amendments would take effect immediately and impact the 2018 election election cycle. Orange Park residents last amended the town charter in 2011 , **Campbell** said.

Meanwhile, Green Cove Springs voters will elect candidates to two City Council seats during its municipal election. The City Council Seat 1 candidates are incumbent Pamela Lewis and challenger Michelle Sweatland. Running for City Council Seat 2 are incumbent Mitch Timberlake and challenger Dale Garlinghouse.

Keystone Heights won't have a municipal election because incumbent Tony Brown is unopposed for re-election to City Council Seat 4. More information about all of Clay's municipal elections is available at the Clay County Supervisor of Elections website, clayelections.com or by calling (904) 269-6350.

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Sarah Campbell
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Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
January 10, 2017

Divided Orange Park Town Council continues red light camera program

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

A divided Orange Park Town Council decided to continue the town's red light camera program following slightly more than an hour-long discussion after listening to arguments from residents on both sides of the controversial issue.

The council in separate split votes Jan. 3 agreed to continue the program, then approved a new three-year contract with American Traffic Solutions Inc. (ATS) which currently operates and maintains the seven red light cameras at the intersections of Kingsley and DeBarry avenues, U.S. 17 and Loring Avenue, and U.S. 17 at Kingsley Avenue. First, the council voting 4-1 with Vice Mayor Scott Land dissenting, rejected a motion to end the program immediately. Land, an outspoken council critic of red light cameras, had made the motion to shut down the program.

After discussing the details of proposals from ATS and three other companies seeking the contract to operate and maintain the cameras, the council voting 3-2 with Mayor Eugene Nix and Councilman Steve Howard dissenting, awarded the contract to ATS. Howard said he'd had more calls from people opposed to the cameras than those who supported the program. "I just haven't been sold on the fact that this is a safety factor. ...I haven't seen the facts and figures that say this really does make it a safety factor. I've seen more on it as a revenue generator ..." Nix said of his concerns regarding the program. Being a revenue source was a key selling point statewide when red light cameras first came out. But revenue is decreasing as more drivers become aware of the cameras, he said.

Police Chief Gary Goble said he considers 500 to 600 fewer red light runners a month as a safety factor. Red light cameras change the way people drive, Goble said. Councilwoman Connie Thomas said she definitely would not be for red light cameras just because they generate revenue for the town. "If it's truly helping with the safety of our citizens and our town because Highway 17 has gotten so overcrowded that the police force is not able to do their job, I truly want to know that," said Thomas, acknowledging that she has been on the fence about the issue. "I certainly didn't come in for red light cameras but I am for safety on Highway 17," Thomas said. She also said something needed to be done so that the town never has to rely on red light camera revenue to balance its budget. Thomas, Land and Mayor Gary Meeks voted to award the contract to ATS.

A half-dozen Clay County residents spoke out on the issue. All but one urged the council to stop the red light camera program. Opponents including David Coughlin of Orange Park said red light cameras are more about generating revenue than public safety. Coughlin described the law – Mark Wandall Traffic Safety Act – which authorizes red light cameras to be used in Orange Park, Clay County and elsewhere in Florida "as functioning as an oppressive revenue generation scheme." Coughlin likened the cameras to "institutionalized blackmail." He and the other

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opponents said motorists are deprived of their constitutional right to confront their accuser because the cameras take videos of the vehicles that trip them in intersections, and the citation is sent to the owner, who might not have been driving the vehicle when the red light was run.

Travis Christensen of Green Cove Springs said the red light camera program is an affront to basic fairness and due process. He compared red light cameras them to historic speed traps in Waldo, Hampton and Lawtey. "I hope you decide to get rid of them. I believe it's an over-enforcement of laws, which is a kind of oppression on citizens like any other kind of over-enforcement," Christensen said.

John Capes of Orange Park disagreed. "When did it become oppressive to require people to obey traffic laws? How did we get to that point where we're oppressing someone when we expect them to comply with the law. That makes no sense," Capes said. A person inclined to speed up to get through a yellow light is going to do that regardless whether there are red light cameras or not because that is human behavior, he said. Capes said he rides a motorcycle and has almost been hit a couple times by motorists. "Since we put up those red light cameras, I see far fewer people dashing through intersections," Capes said. "Yeah, it generates revenue and I guess that's not necessarily a bad thing but in my opinion just as so many have to deal with that Kingsley intersection regularly, boy, I sure appreciate the fact that more people are stopping or at least preparing to stop when the light starts to change. I think it's [red light cameras] made people sensitive to that fact. If somebody feels oppressed because they have to obey the law. That says something pretty odd to me."

Goble, fielding questions from the council, said the town saw an initial reduction in red light runners since installing the cameras three years ago. About 70,000 cars pass through the town daily, he said. "When we first started the program we had roughly 1,200- to 1,300 a month and we got all the way down to about 250 a month," Goble said. Over the past year to year-and a half, police have ticketed about 700 violators a month. It's unknown whether that is due to more cars on the road, lower gas prices or other factors, he said. Goble said the easy answer would be to get rid of the cameras because they are a lot of work. "But the honest answer is I think they change the way that people drive. I think they drive safer in the town of Orange Park and I think they are a benefit to the town residents of Orange Park," Goble replied when the council asked whether he recommended keeping the cameras.

Goble said side-impact crashes have decreased at intersections with the cameras. But there still are rear-end crashes, which is not unusual throughout the town, he said. I think people are still running red lights," said Goble, adding he firmly believes law enforcement "should use every tool in the box to make their job better, more consistent," including red light cameras because they are legal in Florida and been a useful tool. "But there are still a lot of close calls out there. There are a lot of crashes that are avoidable, but just barely, because people run the red lights. So, it happens. But I think safety is key," Goble told the council.

An advisory committee composed of Goble, Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell**, Fire Chief Al Barker and police Lt. John Jock, had recommended ATS after evaluating each of the

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four company proposals then ranking them using a point system based on how well each met the town's needs and specifications. All the committee members ranked ATS No. 1 based on the cost of the program, lack of down-time and training needed, the experience of their personnel and company in Florida, and the low bandwidth needed for Orange Park officers to review the camera videos in the field. Another factor was \$89,250 in credits ATS was offering the town with its system. The credit offered, lack of downtime, fact that officers won't have to train on a new system combined to result in an estimated \$126,358 savings with the ATS system, according to the committee's evaluation summary. So, the adjusted total cost of the ATS system was \$982,136 compared to respective adjusted totals of \$1,179,866, \$1,260,024 and \$1,108,494 from the other three companies, the evaluation showed.

The town began using red light cameras in 2013 based on an initial three-year contract that would have expired if the council hadn't approved a 120-day extension on Sept. 29, 2015. That extension would have expired Jan. 2, 2017. The town gets \$75 per \$158 ticket for a red light camera violation. Last year red light cameras generated about \$579,167 in revenue for the town, while the expenditures — not including the cost of watching the videos recorded by the cameras — were about \$337,300.

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Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
December 28, 2016

Parkway Inn to remain closed, owes Orange Park thousands in overdue water bills

Author: Teresa Stepzinski

The Parkway Inn – closed by court order due to chronic crime and other problems – won't reopen Sunday as intended, its attorney says, because Orange Park claims it's owed about \$76,000 for delinquent water service bills, a re-connection fee and down payment for future use.

The town also won't allow the 200-bed motel owned by Jax Inns Inc., to reopen until it completes extensive and expensive modifications, then passes an inspection by the Orange Park fire marshal to ensure compliance with state life safety and fire safety regulations, said Bradley S. Defoe, one of the motel's attorneys in a Wednesday email. "Management is still evaluating its options with respect to the future of the Parkway Inn, including the possibility of reopening the motel or selling the property. It is unfair and unfortunate that the Parkway Inn finds itself in this situation," Defoe said.

The court order shuttering the motel at 300 Park Ave. expires at midnight Saturday – six months after being imposed. Also expiring Saturday are a series conditions imposed by the town on Jax Inns Inc. that mandate repairs, renovations and other improvements intended to ensure the \$44-a-night establishment is safe. "There is no additional legal prohibition on them opening for business Jan. 1 [Sunday] other than the same legal requirements that every other business would have to follow in order to reopen after being closed," Town Attorney Sam Garrison said. That means the motel must pay its outstanding water service bill and related costs and pass a fire inspection, he said.

Clay County Circuit Court Judge Mike Sharrit ordered the Parkway, formerly the Rodeway Inn, closed July 1 through Dec. 31 citing evidence submitted by the town documenting pervasive criminal activity including meth labs, other drug crimes and prostitution as well as chronic public safety, health and building code violations. Sharrit's ruling enforced the town's Nuisance Abatement Board order closing the motel. The judge determined the town afforded Jax Inns due process under the law as well as multiple opportunities to remedy the problems. In his ruling, Sharrit said "that persistent criminal activity is inextricably entangled with the hotel's current business model, structural configuration and overall environment." Since then, new issues have arisen spawning uncertainty whether the motel will reopen to guests, who in the past included poor families unable to afford living elsewhere, as well as people involved in criminal activity.

The town shut off the motel's water Oct. 4 for non-payment. The overdue water bill is about \$40,000, Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said. As of Wednesday the motel hadn't paid the outstanding water service bills, related re-connection fee or down payment for future service, **Campbell** said. "It's not the goal to be punitive. It's just this is the amount set in the [town's] water and sewer rate ordinance. We are treating them no differently than any other business in the town," said **Campbell**, noting the fees relating to that volume of water service

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use run up quickly. Referring to the \$40,000 the town says its owed, Defoe said "it is unclear how that accrued since there have been no guests at the motel since June." Defoe said the motel "already has spent tens of thousands of dollars required by the [Orange Park] fire chief in 2015."

Fueling speculation about the motel's future is a development plan that shows the property being used for a new Wawa convenience store. Brightwork Real Estate based in Tampa, which represents Wawa, submitted the plan Nov. 21 to Stephen Smith, town Economic and Community Development director. A Wawa representative said the company is keeping its options open but declined comment specifically about the Park Avenue site. "At this time we are continuing to look in the market and will be sharing more information about our construction and opening schedules in 2017. In the meantime we continue to look for sites but cannot confirm anything until we have all necessary permits," said Colleen Labik, a Wawa spokeswoman.

Campbell said the town hasn't received a formal site plan yet although town officials heard Wawa has the property under contract and hopes to close around April 1.

In addition, a Florida Department of Transportation official told the Town Council during a special meeting Nov. 7 that Wawa applied for a permit in the area including the motel site. Built in 1974, the motel is part of nearly a 6-acre tract on Park Avenue, also known locally as U.S. 17, between Wells Road and Interstate 295 inside the northern Orange Park town limits. It has a market value of \$1,650,000. The motel paid property taxes of \$29,252 on Nov. 30, and is current, Clay County records show.

The town's Nuisance Abatement Board declared the motel a public nuisance in February 2015. The decision followed a series of mandated improvement – including the 24/7 on-site presence of uniform police and/or private security officers, property repairs and enhancements – that the board said must be done in order for the motel to continue operating. Those improvements reduced criminal activity but it persisted. On Dec. 14, 2015, the board voted unanimously to close the motel because of its chronic problems. Board members also noted the inability of the motel owner to resolve the problems in accordance with board's specifications in a timely manner, although some improvements and repairs had been made. The board then petitioned the court to enforce the closure order.

Garrison said if the Parkway reopens it will start with a clean slate beginning at 12:01 a.m. Sunday under Orange Park's public nuisance ordinance. "It's kind of like somebody getting off probation. You have a start date. You have a stop date. And when you're off, you're off," Garrison said. Like every other business, the Parkway, still will have to comply with local and state regulations to ensure that the business is safe," he said. "Hopefully, they've learned the appropriate lessons and they've taken the necessary steps to clean up the property and it's not going to be an issue," Garrison said.

Defoe said regardless whether the motel reopens, it is proceeding with a federal court lawsuit against the town. The suit accuses the town of discrimination via selective enforcement of the public nuisance ordinance. In the suit, the motel asserts it was the only establishment declared a

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Sarah Campbell*****(Articles are in reverse chronological order)***

public nuisance, and singled out for enforcement by the town's Nuisance Abatement Board although a neighboring motel – Astoria Hotel – experienced similar problems. The town in its defense asserts Jax Inns is precluded from claiming selective enforcement by its own actions and course of conduct. Its claim also is barred under law by the fact the Astoria Hotel no longer operates exclusively as a motel, according to the town's response to the suit. U.S. District Judge Brian J. Davis ordered the issue into mediation. A mediation hearing was held Nov. 18 and continued but no date was set, federal court records showed.

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Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
August 14, 2016

Clay County volunteer group working to help community cat colonies

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

An all-volunteer Clay County nonprofit is working to educate people about community cats — both free-roaming domestic and feral felines — and spread the word about the resources available in the county to help care for the animals such as a free spay-and-neuter program offered by Clay Humane for personal pets as well as homeless or feral cats.

Community Critter Care of Clay County (5C) is a dedicated group of about dozen members who are experienced in caring for community cat colonies. In the process of incorporating as a Florida 501c3 organization, the group works with local government entities, businesses and residents throughout the county to educate and assist with management of cat colonies, trap, neuter and release — also known as trap-neuter-return (TNR) efforts — and to resolve conflicts. The organization's idea "is to educate the community, have practical ways to deal with cats that need to be spayed or neutered, as well as set quality standards known as best practices of the caregivers to use as guidelines in colony management," said Bill Clark, president of the group numbering about a dozen people. Clark, of Orange Park, has about 30 years of experience helping community cats. Still in its infancy, the group meets once a month to go over issues affecting community cat caregivers.

"We're already working with existing caregivers and people in the community to establish and maintain trap, neuter and release programs within the Clay County area. That is trapping cats, getting them spayed or neutered and a rabies shot, and when they're ready, returning them to the environment that they came from," said Pat Terranova, group treasurer. Terranova said they educate caregivers and others how to manage a cat colony. That includes information about how and where to feed the cats to avoid wildlife that can become problematic as a result of feeding techniques, she said. She also said they provide information about "how to watch out for illness in the colony and what to do if a cat shows signs of developing some kind of illness." "We're kind of there to give advice, and as people need us, we've been teaming together to go and help when someone has a trapping situation involving a large number of cats," Terranova said. "It's how we can make it a better place for everybody, including the animals."

The group is aiming for Oct. 1 as its official incorporation launch date. It has been meeting at 2 p.m. the fourth Saturday of each month at Orange Park Public Library, 2054 Plainfield Ave., since March, said Jane Hawley, organization secretary. Hawley said the group is establishing quality standards — known as best practices — for trap, neuter and return. They are becoming a major resource on managing cat colonies throughout the county, she said. "The community cat population is diverse. A community cat is a cat that is homeless," said Hawley, of Orange Park. She noted that community cats include domestic or feral felines — either kittens or adults. "Our purpose is to reduce the number of homeless cats in the community through trap, neuter and return efforts. We will work with the Town of Orange Park, Clay County, residents and

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businesses so people and cats can live together within the community," said Hawley, adding that often is accomplished by handling complaints.

Recently, Deborah Hastings, a 5C member and president of her own kitten rescue, Fuzzy Buckkets Rescue, spent about three hours in the blazing sun trying to corral an elusive stray kitten that had been crawling up into car engines at an Orange Park apartment complex. With the assistance of complex residents, they finally trapped the kitten in the evening with a humane trap. The kitten subsequently was placed for adoption with the kitten rescue, Hawley said.

TOWN SUPPORTIVE

Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said the town supports trap, neuter and return programs because the population of outdoor community cats grows exponentially if reproduction is not altered. "TNR is an effective and humane reproduction control method. By removing the reproductive ability in community and domestic cats the ever-growing numbers decline," **Campbell** said. "We look forward to working alongside Community Critter Care to address the best possible outcomes for community cats."

The group's mission was initiated during Orange Park Town Council debates last year about a proposed ordinance aimed at controlling the growing feral cat population in Orange Park. The council ultimately tabled indefinitely that proposed ordinance. At that time, authorities estimated the town had about 1,200 feral cats. The estimated population of outdoor community cats throughout Clay County was about 28,000 at that time. The proposed Orange Park ordinance focused on banning the feeding of feral, stray or community cats on public property within town limits. Clark and other 5C members were among the experienced cat colony caretakers and animal welfare advocates who spoke out against that measure. When the council formed an ad hoc committee, Clark and the others volunteered to work with the town to come up with a viable humane alternative. "It became apparent to everybody that the trap-neuter-return was the way to go, but that requires education. That requires resources. It requires transportation and it requires someone like Clay Humane willing to do low-cost or free spay and neutering," Clark said. Clay Humane is an integral part of the overall solution, Hawley said.

CLINIC OFFERS SERVICE

A nonprofit low-cost veterinary clinic, Clay Humane at 2230 Filmore St., Orange Park, offers free spay and neutering and a rabies shot for cats — both domestic and feral. Each Wednesday, Clay Humane reserves its veterinary clinic for cats on a first-come, first-serve basis for the sterilization and rabies vaccination. Clay Humane asks people to make an appointment, and requires that the cat be in a humane trap or carrier, according to its website. The Clay Humane initiative is intended to help lower the intake of cats at area animal shelters, therefore reducing euthanasia of companion animals, the website states.

Linda Welzant, Clay Humane executive director, lauded Community Critter Care of Clay County. "It takes active, concerned animal advocates like Community Critter Care of Clay County to help ensure we treat our feral cats conscientiously. Groups like this are vital in combating the pet overpopulation problem and educating the public on the plight of community

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cats," Welzant said. Clark said their organization hopes to have a pilot project up and running in the fall at a local apartment complex that has agreed to work with the organization to trap some of the stray cats and kittens that live in their area, get them sterilized and then return them to an on-site managed colony. The complex also will allow the group to share educational material for the residents at the complex so they could do TNR themselves, he said. "This could be something we could do. We could measure how much effort it takes, how many resources, how long it takes and how many cats we catch," Clark said. "Hopefully, we'll have other apartment complexes eventually request help from us, and we'll have some kind of protocol developed so that we could either assist or even take part in the spay/neuter program with them."

Public education also is a major goal, group members say. "The biggest misconception is people think the cats are either dangerous or sick or can spread disease. The chance of that happening is slim to none," said Clark, who manages a cat colony of about 25 cats on a two-acre tract. "Most of these cats if they live outdoors, if somebody is feeding them and monitoring them, they can be as healthy as house cats." Another misconception, Terranova said, is that cat colonies wipe out wildlife. The cats are part of the ecosystem, Clark said. "It would be better for them if they had homes," Clark said. "But since they have been abandoned by people over the years and that's how their populations start, we're trying to give them the best quality of life, minimize their suffering and minimize any problems they might cause for human neighbors because they are homeless."

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Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
July 2, 2016

Park council considering Kingsley Avenue East improvements

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

The Orange Park Town Council will hold a public meeting at 6 p.m. Wednesday to garner resident input regarding planned street, median and parking improvements to a three-block section of Kingsley Avenue East from U.S. 17 to River Road near the St. Johns River.

"This is the real historic, original footprint of the town," Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said of the proposed project. The council on June 23 approved using about \$800,000 from the town's Sanitation Fund Balance to pay for project in the longtime residential neighborhood near Club Continental. The public hearing will be at Town Hall, 2042 Park Ave., **Campbell** said. "It's for resurfacing the street, fix storm water [drainage], add some parking along the sides, add curb and gutter so that people don't park in the median anymore," **Campbell** said. Sidewalks also are planned so the River Road area "can be more accessible in a safe and with a more appealing look to it," she said.

Campbell also said depending on the cost, it's possible historic-style lighting and decorative pavers might be included in the project. The upcoming public meeting will be the second held by the council to get resident feedback about the project. The next step will be to have engineers design the entire three-block section, then the town will go out for bids and start construction, she said. Construction could begin sometime after Oct. 1 — which is when the funding becomes available for the project — if all goes well, **Campbell** said.

Neighborhood residents have called for such a project at least since 2012 but the town lacked the money to pay for it given decisions given other priorities for capital improvement projects. Councilman Steve Howard made the motion to use the Sanitation Fund money for the Kingsley Avenue East project. The decision means the town now has a budget totalling about \$817,000 for the Kingsley Avenue East project. Before the vote, Councilwoman Connie Thomas said she wanted to ensure the engineers to look at the possibility of putting the utilities underground as part of the \$800,000 for the project.

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Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
May 10, 2016

New name won't halt legal case Troubled motel in Orange Park, facing hearing in June on possible shutdown, is now Parkway Inn

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

A crime-plagued, rundown Orange Park motel sports a new name, but still faces potential court-ordered closure as a public nuisance. Parkway Inn is the new name for the Rodeway Inn - a \$40-a-night extended-stay motel that the Town of Orange Park has petitioned in Clay County Circuit Court to enforce a closure order issued by the town's Nuisance Abatement Board. Citing pervasive criminal activity as well as chronic public safety, health and building code violations, the board declared the 200-room motel a public nuisance and ordered it shuttered. Workers installed the new signs Friday at the motel at 300 Park Ave.

"The change in the name of the motel in no way affects the legal proceedings and they are scheduled to move forward next month as previously determined," Town Attorney Sam Garrison said Monday. Motel attorney Dan Copeland didn't return two Times-Union telephone messages seeking comment Monday. Circuit Court Judge Mike Sharrit on June 8 will hear evidence and legal arguments whether to enforce the town's closure order. Motel owner Jax Inns Inc., led by Jitendra B. Patel, is fighting the town in court, asserting that the board exceeded its jurisdiction, and that closing down the motel is unwarranted.

Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said a sign company called her several weeks ago asking about regulations governing signs because it had been hired to change the one at the motel. "They said the Rodeway Inn corporation had pulled their franchise ... called their flag ... from this facility, and so the facility owners needed to get a new sign," **Campbell** said. **Campbell** said Jax Inns Inc. remains the motel's owner.

Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation records Monday verified Jax Inns Inc. as the motel's owner, while state corporation records showed Patel was the director and registered agent for the company. Rodeway is part of Choice Hotels International Inc., The Choice corporation website states there are no Rodeway Inn hotels near Orange Park. Corporation officials didn't return two Times-Union telephone messages seeking comment Monday. "I don't know what triggered the change but it appears they're done," **Campbell** said of Rodeway's affiliation with the troubled motel. However, the website of a travel magazine, Meetings and Conventions, lists the motel under the Parkway Inn name and includes a list of amenities and photos of pristine-looking rooms. However, there is no mention of the motel's problems - among the most recent was the police discovery of a working meth lab in one of the rooms in February.

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[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Sarah Campbell** is listed below. Removed was the information about the other county's elections.]

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
February 22, 2016

Election unneeded in 2 Clay towns Orange Park, Green Cove seats uncontested; 1 race in Keystone

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

The disqualification of an Orange Park Town Council candidate, and unrelated lack of opposition in Green Cove Springs means neither Clay County municipality will have an election April 12. Keystone Heights voters, however, will decide one City Council race. The candidate for the second seat on the ballot is unopposed. That means Keystone Heights is the only Clay County municipality that will vote that day.

Orange Park Town Council would have had two positions - Seats 4 and 5 - on that ballot. However, each now only has one qualified candidate. John Capes, executive director of Moosehaven, was disqualified from Seat 4 because he didn't have enough valid petitions.

Constance Biemiller Thomas is now unopposed for the seat being vacated by Councilman Jim Renninger, who is term-limited out. Thomas is a licensed clinical social worker, and a founding member of Citizens for a Greater Orange Park, a grassroots citizens group that last year advocated for improvements intended to reduce motor vehicle traffic on heavily traveled Plainfield Avenue, and make it more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly. Plainfield is a historic and major thoroughfare running parallel to U.S. 17.

In the Seat 5 race, incumbent Gary Meeks was unopposed. Meeks has served on the council since 2010, and currently is mayor.

Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said it's not common to not have a municipal election but it's not the first time. "It's happened from time to time, but we just don't have a lot of people decide to qualify for these seats," **Campbell** said.

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Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
February 13, 2016

Study ongoing to improve Orange Park bicycle and pedestrian paths

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

Jeanne Hargrave concedes she doesn't ride her bicycle as much as she once did. Nonetheless, the 73-year-old Orange Park bicycling enthusiast routinely pedals about 100 to 150 miles a week in Orange Park, which has some bike paths, although there are gaps between the existing routes. Hargrave is among bicyclists and walkers hoping an ongoing study by the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization evaluating the existing bicycle and pedestrian system in the Orange Park area will lead to improved access and safety for those users. "One thing I'd like to see is real bike lanes all the way across on Wells Road because there is nowhere between Wells Road and Kingsley Avenue to get over toward the St. Johns River, the other side of town," Hargrave, a founding member of the North Florida Bicycle Club, said of the need for bike lanes along Wells all the way from Blanding Boulevard to the river.

The North Florida TPO is the independent regional transportation planning agency for Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties. The Orange Park study stems from the organization's 2013 regional bicycle and pedestrian plan intended to improve bicycling and walking opportunities in the region, enhance public safety and encourage more people to bike and walk – activities separate studies show can promote better health as well as reduce motor vehicle traffic. "As far as existing routes, there aren't many well defined routes currently. Primarily, it is the bike lanes along Kingsley and the Doctors Lake Trail," said Karl M. Soderholm, vice president and director of landscape architecture for England, Thims and Miller Inc. of Jacksonville, which is the project consultant. Soderholm said current data show most of the traffic seems to focus on the trail, Moody Avenue, River Road, Plainfield Avenue and Peoria Road with some connecting streets in Orange Park.

The Orange Park study includes a survey seeking input from residents and others who bike or walk in that area. So far, about 100 people have responded to the survey, which is available online at the transportation planning organization website, said Marci Larson, public affairs manager for the agency. The organization also is conducting a similar bicycle/pedestrian study on Amelia Island in Nassau County. It recently completed similar studies focused on Jacksonville's Riverside/San Marco neighborhoods and the Beaches, Larson said. The Orange Park study will cost about \$70,000, while the one for Amelia Island will be about \$60,000. The transportation planning organization is picking up the tab for both studies, which will be completed by the end of June, Larson said. Among the data being collected is information about accidents involving bicyclists or pedestrians in the Orange Park study area, and the circumstances of those incidents. Meanwhile, the agency is looking to get as much input from the public by mid-March, Larson said.

Hargrave is among a group of bicyclists that generally ride together in Orange Park. She's also ridden in numerous cities throughout the country – most recently in Dallas area and Providence,

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R.I. Those areas have bridges for bicyclists and pedestrians over interstates and rivers. "It's like 'wow,' why can't we have something like this?" said Hargrave, who was among the first to take the Orange Park survey, and previously has participated in discussions about improving the network of bike trails in the Clay County. "One of my pet peeves is we now have two bike paths, and I ride them ... but they don't connect well," Hargrave said.

Town officials said that's been a common concern among the few complaints they've received from bicyclists. "We do get complaints from time to time from people who say 'I was riding my bike and there is no way to get from here to here. Or can't you make a little sidewalk that connects this spot to that spot, because it would be really convenient,' " Assistant Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said. "I hear, 'Milwaukee Avenue doesn't have a sidewalk at all from Plainfield Avenue to Carnes Street.' So that's a problem area because if you are trying to get people connected to the Doctors Lake Trail from the Black Creek Trail, there is a gap on Milwaukee Avenue," **Campbell** said. "The other complaint I've received, is getting from one side of Doctors Lake Trail to the other side of Doctors Lake Trail because there aren't any crossings."

Hargrave is among those saying Milwaukee Avenue needs to be among the priorities. Now, one section of their normal route is impeded by a big ditch. "I'd like to see a connection from Milwaukee ... so you can ride up the one trail and cross on Milwaukee and get on the Doctors Lake Trail without having to dismount your bike, walk across the road and wade through the ditch then get back on your bike and go on," she said.

Campbell said the transportation planning organization initiated the current study. The town welcomed it because "any time somebody wants to have an engineering study and make recommendations for improvements where the town doesn't have to fund it, I think that is good for the residents," she said. She estimated the study area encompasses about six miles both within the town limits and outside in unincorporated Clay County. Some bicyclists have complained in the past – either individually or in small groups – to town officials areas that would benefit from improvements, **Campbell** said. Meanwhile, **Campbell** said the town is doing sidewalk improvements on Plainfield Avenue, which is a historic and major thoroughfare through the town. That work is intended to make the scenic, tree-lined route more bike- and pedestrian friendly.

Larson said they are scheduled to be at the Orange Park Farmers' and Arts Market set for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 6 at Town Hall Park, 2042 Park Ave., Orange Park, to talk to residents about the project. At the end of the study, there will be recommendations regarding potential improvements, which ones should take priority, the projected cost and possible funding sources for each projects. The information is intended for Orange Park and Clay County leaders to use in making decisions regarding future transportation infrastructure, she said.

Hargrave hopes this study will yield results. Although there is no guarantee, all people should make their voices heard, she said.

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Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
October 6, 2015

Plainfield Avenue utility, roadway improvements begin in Orange Park

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

Construction is getting underway on critically needed water and sewer line replacements, and roadway improvements to Plainfield Avenue — a heavily traveled north-south artery through Orange Park. Work is scheduled to begin Monday on the nearly \$3.3 million infrastructure project. If all goes well, it will be completed by Oct. 10, 2016, Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell** said. R.B. Baker Construction of St. Augustine is handling the project, which includes reconstruction of about 7,200 linear feet of roadway, curb and gutter, a partial sidewalk and driveways along the street winding through a long-established neighborhood that is home to military retirees, families with children, young couples and Orange Park Elementary School.

Some of the town's largest and oldest water lines run the entire length of Plainfield and connect Orange Park's two water plants. Those aging lines must be replaced as soon as possible because town officials are concerned the lines are susceptible to breaking. If that happened, the town would be without water service and under a boil order for several days, town officials have said. The project includes installing a new 16-inch-wide water main, related water service lines and fire hydrants on Plainfield from Wells Road to Kingsley Avenue. A new 12-inch-wide gravity sewer main, manholes and lateral service lines will be installed from Wells Road to Ash Street. There also will be a partial storm drain installed and replacement of an existing one from Wells Road to Kingsley Avenue, according to a project summary by Rusty Grimes, town capital projects manager.

At the request of town officials, JEA crews using a large crane moved five electricity poles on Plainfield last weekend to accommodate the road work, and avoid underground utility conflicts, said Gerri Boyce, a JEA spokeswoman. "The town's goal is to always have one lane open, but there might be times when that is not an option," said **Campbell**, noting there might be a few detours required during the project.

Plainfield Avenue is one of the oldest streets — if not the oldest — in Orange Park. It's long been a major route through the town, although the tree-shaded street is relatively narrow in many sections. It parallels U.S. 17, an often traffic-choked commuter route through Orange Park. Since the town's early days, motorists have used Plainfield to bypass the weekday gridlock of U.S. 17, say neighborhood residents as well as present and past town officials.

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Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
September 23, 2015

Orange Park Inclusive Playground a place for all abilities

Author/Byline: Teresa Stepzinski

Town officials are hoping for donations to install new swings for children and adults with disabilities at Orange Park's Inclusive Playground, which opened last year after being funded entirely with grants and contributions. Centrally located at Town Hall Park, 2042 Park Ave., the playground is among the first of its kind in Clay County and one of the most popular. It is designed to accommodate children and adults of all abilities while providing opportunities for imaginative play.

The playground boasts 1,800 square feet of play space including a rubberized surface. The specially designed playground equipment includes a double slide, a swing set, a motorcycle-style spring rocker, fireman's pole, cocoon, cave, sand pit and a spinner cup. All comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, said Tasha Hyder, town events and recreation coordinator who initiated the project, which didn't cost taxpayers a dime. Hyder said it was crucial the playground not only be fun for children but also accessible and enjoyable for adults with disabilities who bring the youngsters to play there. It also was built to blend in with the natural beauty and landscape of the tree-shaded park. The playground is adjacent to Town Hall as well as the police and fire department buildings — all which have handicapped-accessible restrooms. The rubberized surface that cushions falls as well as provides traction for wheelchairs is the playground's most unique and useful aspect, Hyder said.

Clay County also operates a park featuring playground equipment and restrooms accessible to children and adults with special needs. Moody Avenue Park, 3510 Moody Ave., is in Orange Park but outside the town limits.

SPARK OF AN IDEA

Hyder came up with the idea for the Inclusive Playground project during the first month after the town hired her in February 2012. She could see the playground from her office window. "One day I saw the wooden playground out there and at the time there was a group of kids and they were physically disabled and they couldn't do anything ... And I made it my mission that day to bring a new playground that they all could use," Hyder said. A University of North Florida graduate holding bachelor's and master's degrees, Hyder is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional. That certification comes from the National Recreation and Park Association, which is the leading nationwide nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of public parks, recreation and conservation. She previously worked for the Pasco County Parks and Recreation Department.

Hyder said from 2012 it took about a year, working on-and-off, to flesh out the project. It took a full year to line up all the funding, including sponsorships, she said. On Jan. 21 of last year, Hyder pitched the project to the Town Council, which gave her the green light to go forward

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with it. A month later, they broke ground and the playground opened a few weeks after that. The roughly \$52,000 project was paid for by grants as well as private donations from individuals, businesses, nonprofits and community organizations. The town received an NFL Play 60 grant. Contributions also came from, among others, Moosehaven, the Jaguars Foundation, Wolfson Children's Hospital, CSX, BestBet, Publix Supermarket Charities and Orange Park Medical Center. Hyder hopes to get similar grants or contributions so the town can buy a new wheelchair swing, and is exploring the possibility of a unique tandem swing that allows a parent and child to face each other and the parent's momentum makes the swing go back and forth. "We're accepting donations," said Hyder, adding that a good wheelchair swing could cost about \$5,000. The type of tandem swing they are looking at costs about \$1,200, she said.

CONSTANT USE

Except during bad weather, the playground's rarely empty. It appeals to those with disabilities and those without them. Kids play there every day. After school, weekends and during the town's monthly Farmers' and Arts Market are its busiest times. Students with special needs from Lighthouse Learning Center and the G.I.F.T.ed Learning Center, both just a couple of blocks away from the park, as well as local church groups are regulars at the Inclusive Playground, Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell** said. However, the playground has a broad fan base. "Not only do you have children of all ability levels, but you have parents and caregivers of all ability levels. So, if you have a place where a parent in a wheelchair or a veteran with a missing limb can bring their children and they can access the playground with their child, that adds another level of accessibility that other facilities don't have," **Campbell** said.

Melanie Coughlin of Orange Park comes to the park often, either with her 35-year-old son, Adam, who has cerebral palsy and relies on a wheelchair, or her young niece and nephew, who race around with seemingly boundless energy. "A new wheelchair swing would be awesome for the big kids," said Coughlin, noting her son enjoys the playground but doesn't come as often because it no longer has a wheelchair swing since the old one wore out. That one also was limited in the type and size of wheelchair it could accommodate. "He likes to swing," Coughlin said of her son. Coming to the park is one of their family's favorite pastimes. "It's a great Inclusive Playground, but it really needs a new wheelchair swing." Coughlin brought her 10-year-old niece, Bobbi Clifton, and 2-year-old nephew, E.J. Clifton, to the park "to run some energy off" on a sunny morning earlier this month. The youngsters ran around and climbed all over the playground equipment with their favorites being the double slide. E.J. also liked the motorcycle spring rocker. A huge grin on his face, he gripped the handlebars tightly as his big sister held onto him and gently pushed to get the ride rocking back and forth. "It's fun," said E.J., giggling then nodding his head in approval when asked if he was having a good time.

Hyder said the town would like to be able to get the wheelchair and tandem swings as soon as possible. "If someone calls me up and wants to give \$5,000 for a new wheelchair swing, we will install it within two weeks," Hyder said.

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Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
July 15, 2015

Clay commission OKs funds to replace Orange Park Skateboard Park

Author: Teresa Stepzinski

Town of Orange Park officials say construction might begin early next year to replace the popular but outdated Orange Park Skateboard Park with a modern concrete facility now that the Clay County Commission has agreed to fund the majority of the projected \$407,500 project.

The commission voting 4-1 with Commissioner Wendell Davis dissenting July 9 pledged \$360,000 in county capital improvement funds for the project. The decision came after lengthy discussion as well as sometimes emotional pleas from young skateboarders, parents and skate park volunteer. Town officials and skate park supporters said the park benefits the community by providing a safe supervised recreation site for youth throughout Clay County, and bolsters the county's economy because skaters come from throughout Northeast Florida for competitions held at the facility. Town officials said the facility must be converted to a concrete skate park because the current wooden ramp systems need continuous repair and are teetering on the brink of being unsafe. The proposed project calls for replacing the old facility with a new 15,000-square foot concrete skate park including energy-efficient LED lighting.

Orange Park recently was awarded a \$50,000 Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program grant for skate park improvements. The grant will serve as Orange Park's share of the project. When combined with the county funding, Orange Park will have a total of \$410,000 to replace the skate park. The skate park is both the only one in Clay County, and only one within about 25 miles of Orange Park. It's among five public skate parks in North Florida. Owned by the Town of Orange Park, it's run by the nonprofit all-volunteer Orange Park Patrons.

Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell** told the Times-Union the planning and design process will start right away with meetings between town staff and Orange Park Patrons to hone in on the design. The town anticipates have a design/build contract so it will have somebody do the drawings, engineering and construction documents and be the builder of it. It will be done via competitive bid process, she said.

Campbell estimated it might be 90 days at the earliest before the town could put that bid packet out on the street. "I would say construction could begin no sooner than the first of the year," **Campbell** said. Anjie Palmer, executive director of Orange Park Patrons, said the citizens' group is putting together a design committee "to find out exactly what our skaters want."

Normally, about 30 skaters per day use the facility Tuesday through Friday, and on the weekends that goes up to about 60 per day on weekend days. During the summer and holidays when school is out, the park generally is busier. In addition, it hosts contests attracting out-of-town users from throughout Northeast Florida, said Palmer, who is the skate park's on-site manager. Town Manager Jim Hanson told the commission the majority of young people who use the skate park

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are from outside the town limits. The skate ramps are worn-out from use. Repairs to the ramp systems are needed more and more frequently to the extent where it's routinely closed for days at a time. The facility needs to be completely rebuilt from the ground up, he said. Hanson said Orange Park's budget is extremely tight and there is little money available for capital projects. The town must use its limited resources for badly needed overdue street repairs and improvements, he said.

Davis said the county also has a tight budget. Clay needs at least \$250 million in transportation infrastructure improvements and it doesn't have the money to pay for all those projects. Davis also noted that the commission must fund 48 county parks. In addition, he asked for information about what fundraising the skate park does to help pay for the facility.

Palmer has said Orange Park Patrons raises money to operate the skate park via donations, concession stand sales, skateboard contests and a pro shop devoted to skateboard equipment and apparel. There also is a Go Fund Me online donation account in an effort to raise money to help keep the park admission-free. Meanwhile, civic and community groups have done various improvement projects at the facility, she has said.

Commission Chairwoman Diane Hutchings said the skate park deserves some county funding because the facility is unique and serves the whole county. Hutchings noted Orange Park would use the state grant as its contribution to the project. Hutchings, along with commission Vice Chairman Ronnie Robinson and members Gavin Rollins and Wayne Bolla, voted to approve \$360,000 for the skate park.

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Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
July 8, 2015

Orange Park Skateboard Park gets \$50,000 state grant

Author: Teresa Stepzinski

Escaping Gov. Rick Scott's recent budget-cutting veto axe, separate state grants totalling \$100,000 are en route to the Town of Orange Park for renovations and improvements to both Orange Park Skateboard Park and neighboring Orange Park Athletic Association sports complex.

Each facility will receive \$50,000 Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program grants. Neither are matching grants, so the town won't be required to contribute any of its own money for the projects at either facility, Orange Park Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell** said. "It's very good news," **Campbell** told the Times-Union. The state money certainly helps, but the town is still asking the Clay County Commission for county capital improvement funds to replace the aging wooden skate park with a modern facility. It also is asking for county capital funds to enhance the athletic association complex, **Campbell** said.

The skate park grant will pay for plans and construction of new skateboard ramps and equipment, renovating the playground, building new picnic facilities and renovating existing ones, and renovating existing nature trails at the site, according to the project list accompanying the town's application. "We are absolutely thrilled to get the state grant. We think that gives us more support as far as showing the county that we are worth being funded," said Anjie Palmer, executive director of Orange Park Patrons, which manages the skate park.

The skate park is both the only one in Clay County, and only one within about 25 miles of Orange Park. It's among five public skate parks in North Florida. Owned by the Town of Orange Park, it's run by the nonprofit all-volunteer Orange Park Patrons. The popular but aging and weather-beaten public facility needs to be converted to a modern concrete skate park because the current wooden ramp systems need continuous repair and are becoming unsafe, according to town officials and the citizen group. Orange Park is asking the Clay County Commission for \$407,500 in county capital improvement funds to replace the old facility with a new 15,000-square-foot concrete skate park including energy-efficient LED lighting.

Normally, close to 30 skaters per day use the facility Tuesday through Friday, and on the weekends that goes up to about 60 per day on weekend days. During the summer and holidays when school is out, the park generally is busier. In addition, it hosts contests attracting out-of-town users, Palmer said. She said a June 27 mini-ramp contest attracted 25 competitive skaters ages 9 to 25 years old, and spectators from as far away as Jacksonville Beach. Rain showers kept the crowd down, Palmer said.

Meanwhile, the town is asking the county for \$972,000 to pay for improvements to the Orange Park Athletic Association sports complex. The nonprofit all-volunteer athletic association offers baseball, tee-ball, softball, football and cheerleading. About 600 children annually participate in

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

its activities, town officials have said. The state recreation grant will pay for renovation projects at the sports complex's baseball, softball and football fields as well as its support facilities including lighting and fencing, according to the town's application. The county commission was expected to discuss Orange Park's funding requests Thursday during a special meeting about the county capital improvement plan and related funding as part of the commission's work on the 2015-16 budget.

The town also is in the midst of its budget process. The town had budgeted capital funds of about \$5,000 for the skate park, and about \$20,000 for the athletic association complex this year, **Campbell** said. Orange Park Patrons raises money to operate the skate park via donations, concession stand sales, skateboard contests and a pro shop devoted to skateboard equipment and apparel. There also is a Go Fund Me online donation account in an effort to raise money to help keep the park admission-free. The Orange Park Athletic Association gets its revenue from sources including fundraisers, concession stand sales and donations.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
June 4, 2015

Town clerk receives scholarship

Author: Tiffanie Reynolds

Orange Park Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell** was awarded the B. Harold Farmer Scholarship from the Florida City and County Management Association during its annual conference in Orlando. The scholarship is given to a student in public administration who shows a commitment to working in local public management in Florida, and who excels academically as well as outside the classroom. **Campbell** is a University of North Florida student as well as full-time town clerk.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
September 17, 2013

Orange Park loses manager, JEA franchise fee increase proposal

Author/Byline: Beth Reese Cravey

Orange Park Town Manager Cindy Hall announced Monday night that she plans to retire to spend more time with her family and possibly teach. Hall, who has been town manager for three years, made the announcement at a special Town Council meeting called to discuss how to fill a revenue gap in the proposed \$23 million 2013-14 budget. The council had to go back to the budget drawing board after a council-approved source of new revenue — increasing the electric franchise fee paid by JEA customers in Orange Park — was rejected by the Jacksonville utility. But Hall said Tuesday that her decision to retire “by the end of the year” had nothing to do with town’s budget woes. She said she had been pondering a change for some time. “I am looking forward to doing things on my own,” Hall said. She said she wanted to spend more time with children and grandchildren who live in Georgia and South Carolina and might take on part-time teaching gigs. Hall said she planned to submit a formal letter of resignation at Tuesday night’s regular council meeting. At the Monday night meeting, council members did not discuss a replacement search. But she said they may do so at Tuesday’s meeting. Mayor Jim Renninger could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

The Monday budget session was called about the council’s move to increase the electric franchise fee from 6 percent to 10 percent. Franchise fees are charges by government entities to utilities for rights to operate within municipal boundaries. Florida law requires that franchise fees be charged to customers directly and not included in rates. The increase was to take effect in November and generate about \$540,000 a year for the town.

At a council meeting earlier this month, Hall was criticized for not alerting the town’s top electricity users or residents about the franchise fee increase. After the town notified JEA of the change, JEA balked. Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell** said Orange Park officials want to negotiate with JEA. But if no franchise fee increase is forthcoming, budget cuts have to be made elsewhere. Council members came to no decision on those cuts Monday night, she said.

JEA spokeswoman Gerri Boyce said negotiation was not only needed but required by law to make any change to the franchise fee agreement. The amount of the fee is based on the value of the right of way where JEA’s lines run through Orange Park. Only if the value has increased — and can be documented — can the fee increase, she said. The city of Jacksonville’s franchise fee is 3 percent; Boyce said she knew of no other government entity in Florida with a 10 percent fee.

Hall, former Lake County manager, came to Orange Park in January 2011. She was chosen from an original field of nearly 100 candidates to succeed former longtime Town Manager John Bowles, who was unexpectedly fired.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The: Blogs (Jacksonville, FL)
September 5, 2012

Orange Park council member Steve Howard wants discussion on sweepstakes machines

Author/Byline: Adam Kealoha Causey

Sweepstakes games are up for discussion for the Orange Park Town Council after two business owners asked the panel for permission to operate the controversial machines. Council member and Vice Mayor Steve Howard added the games as a talking point to Wednesday night's agenda. There is no vote scheduled. The meeting is set for 7 p.m. at Town Hall, 2042 Park Ave.

Howard said it goes back to him hearing that the games were being played at two Orange Park billiard halls when they shouldn't have been allowed. That was before business owners turned off the machines, according to town administration. Conversations have continued, Howard said, and he's ready for public discussion on when the town will make a decision on whether it has a role in the businesses running the machines. "I got a call back, I guess it was, in May," Howard said. "So here it is September and they're still talking about it."

Permitting for Internet cafes is a county function, and Orange Park Billiards & Pub and Park Avenue Billiards both were denied, according to Orange Park Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell**. "They installed the games and the town asked them to turn them off," **Campbell** said. "The machines are unplugged in their establishments. If Clay County approved their permits, they would still need to be in the proper zoning category for the town, either by rezoning or relocating." Both businesses are zoned "commercial general." Orange Park allows the games in "industrial and warehouse" zones.

Park Avenue owner Martin Reed and Orange Park proprietor Stephen Chelgren asked the town council for permission to operate five games apiece, according to an email provided by **Campbell**. Reed and Chelgren could not be reached for comment. The email says the games have helped the businesses maintain profitability for the last three years during the slow economy. "The sweepstakes games are not our core business," Reed and Chelgren said in the email. "We are not requesting an increase in the number of games at our establishments only to operate our existing games."

Clay County commissioners in January agreed to allow nine licenses for the controversial businesses, which some say encourage gambling addiction. The number of Internet cafes operating must fall below nine for the county to grant new permits.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
July 28, 2011

Orange Park council OKs same tax rate

Author/Byline: Debra W. Buehn

Although it will mean a drop in revenue, the Orange Park Town Council tentatively approved the same property tax rate for 2011-12 that has been in effect for 2010-11. At its July 19 meeting, the council set the tentative tax rate at \$6.30 for every \$1,000 of property value. The vote was 4-0, with Councilman Jim Renninger absent. The rate can be lowered before final passage of the town's 2011-12 budget, but cannot be raised. Town residents will receive notice of the proposed rate when mailings are sent out in August.

With property values continuing to decline, the tentative rate is expected to bring in \$2.8 million in revenue. That's about 6 percent less than the \$3 million brought in during the past year, a loss of about \$183,000, said Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell**. Council members are expected to discuss ways of making up that shortfall in the coming weeks as they discuss the proposed 2011-12 budget, which they are expected to receive in the next week or so, **Campbell** said. Among the options are making budget cuts or drawing from the town's \$5 million reserve fund.

Public hearings will be held on the budget and tax rate on Sept. 6 and Sept. 20, with final adoption scheduled for the latter meeting.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The: Web Edition Articles (Jacksonville, FL)
April 12, 2011

Vote: Help Orange Park fund July 4 fireworks

Author/Byline: Beth Reese Cravey

Orange Park is asking fans of its longtime July 4 fireworks display — canceled last year because of lack of funds — to help the town win a contest to bring fireworks back for 2011.

"A Reader's Digest contest is well underway to help cities earn money for special events. We would love to earn \$10,000 to help support the fireworks this year," Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell** said in an email. Click on this link — <http://wehearyouamerica.readersdigest.com> — and sign up to "cheer" for Orange Park. You can cheer up to 10 times a day.

"We need your votes, Orange Park!" **Campbell** said in the email. "Please spread the word to others you know who would be willing to help cheer us on. Everyone can support OP!" The website also encourages voters to "share a special story, picture or memory about Orange Park," she said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
February 10, 2011

Orange Park may cancel election Only one candidate is running in each of Town Council races.

Author: DEBRA W. BUEHN

With just one candidate running for each of two available Town Council seats, Orange Park elections may be canceled this year. Qualifying for election to Seat 1 and 2 on the five-member council ended at noon Monday, and only one person for each seat had declared as a candidate at that time. Councilman Steve Howard is seeking re-election to Seat 1, and longtime Orange Park resident Marge Hutton hopes to occupy Seat 2. Seat 2 is being vacated by Mayor Bob Standifer, who will not only be leaving his seat on the town council, but the town as well. Standifer announced recently that he and his wife will be moving to North Georgia, where they have maintained a vacation home for the past several years.

Since the candidates for both open seats will be unopposed in the March 8 election, the town council is considering canceling the election altogether to save money, said Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell**. "An election costs about \$4,000," said **Campbell**, who added that with unopposed candidates, the number of those voting could be quite low.

Even with more than one candidate seeking office in recent years, election turnouts have not been high. The Clay County Supervisor of Elections office lists 5,889 registered voters in the town of Orange Park, but just 662 voters participated in last year's town election. In 2009, that number was 633. Canceling this year's election would mean the postponement of public votes on seven proposed charter amendments, which would be put on hold for a year. But the amendments are mostly "clean up and procedural matters" that can wait, **Campbell** said. At the council's Tuesday meeting, council members will discuss whether to hold an election.

Both Howard and Hutton announced their bids for election on Jan. 21, the opening day of the election qualifying period. They will be sworn into office in April, **Campbell** said.

In a prepared statement, Howard said he had been "honored to serve" in his seat for the past three years. "If I am fortunate enough to be re-elected, I pledge to the citizens that I will continue to work to strengthen our town's financial position, to be a good steward of taxpayer money and to be responsive to their requests," he said. Howard has lived in Orange Park since 1988, retiring from his position as director of corporate purchasing with Florida Rock Industries Inc. in 2007. He has served on a number of town committees, including land use planning and policy and finance and budget. He and his wife, Diane, a registered nurse, have been married for 44 years and have three grown children and seven grandchildren.

Hutton has also served on a number of town committees, including the charter review committee and the planning and zoning board. She has a lengthy list of professional and community service efforts as well, and is the chairwoman of the Clay County Chamber of Commerce. She and her

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

husband, Patrick, an orthopedic surgeon, have been married for nearly 36 years and have one daughter, who is completing her doctorate degree in art in Ireland. In listing her reasons for wanting to serve on the town council, Hutton, who said she believes in "fiscal responsibility," said she wants to "work to stimulate the economic vitality of the town, which in turn will enhance the unique character of Orange Park and preserve our quality of life." "My business background coupled with my community service and experience are a perfect combination to get the job done. I am committed to government transparency and accountability to the residents of Orange Park," she said.

Standifer said he and his wife have "mixed emotions" about their move, which will probably occur in early May. They have enjoyed their North Georgia vacation home so much that they have purchased a full-time home in the Cleveland area. "But our hearts are still in Orange Park and we're certainly interested in what the town does," he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
January 13, 2011

Volunteers want to do more for Orange Park Skate Park

Author/Byline: DEBRA W. BUEHN

Fans of the Orange Park Skate Park are hoping to help take the recently renovated facility to the next level. About 30 people - youthful skateboarders and adults - appeared at the Jan. 6 meeting of the Orange Park Parks and Recreation Committee to make their plea. They are asking permission to help "in a more formal manner" maintain and improve the park, building on the renovations the town recently completed with a more than \$400,000 upgrade, said Anjie Palmer, a longtime supporter of the skate park.

The group will next present its proposal to the full town council at its 7 p.m. Tuesday meeting. If the council agrees with the concept, the town attorney will draft a lease/operating agreement with the group for subsequent council action, interim town manager **Sarah Campbell** said in an e-mail. "They do love the improvements the town has made, and want to augment with additional services that the town does not provide onsite," she said.

The skate park supporters have already formed a nonprofit, called the Orange Park Patrons, which was incorporated in Florida this fall, Palmer said. With a five-person board of directors and as many as 50 volunteers, Palmer said the idea is to fill in where the city can't right now so that the park not only retains the improvements made recently, but gets even better. Among the things the group would like to do are to operate a concession stand and a pro shop out of the new facility, as well as to conduct activities such as competitions, camps, workshops and lessons. Profits would go back into the park, Palmer said. In addition, the group would like to add more obstacles to the park and create an area for younger, beginning skaters to learn, Palmer said. And its landscape committee has plans to continue work on a nature walk and fitness trail. "We just want to help out in a responsible way that the town will approve of," Palmer said.

Members of the recreation committee were supportive, especially when they heard that the skate park is considered one of the best in the area, with the potential to attract outside competitions and attention. Councilman Jim Renninger, who chairs the committee, said he was especially impressed by a mother who said the park could be helpful to children such as her son, who has Asperger's Syndrome. "It's another social environment to get involved in, but it's not overwhelming," said Jennifer Ross, who said she plans to spread the word to other members of the newly formed North Florida Asperger's/Autism Support Group.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
August 21, 2010

Orange Park OKs higher tax rate, but not increase Most property owners won't pay more due to declining values

Author: DEBRA W. BUEHN

The Orange Park Town Council tentatively approved a \$7.7 million budget for fiscal year 2010-11 on Tuesday, along with a property tax rate of \$6.30 for every \$1,000 of assessed value. The budget and tax rate will be presented in two public hearings, the first at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 7, at Town Hall.

The tentative tax rate is higher than the current \$5.80, but under state law will not be advertised as a tax increase because of a drop in the town's property values, interim Town Manager **Sarah Campbell** said. Those values fell about 7.7 percent, she said, to a total of \$499.9 million as compared to last year's \$541.4 million. Most property owners will not see an increase in what they pay in property taxes, **Campbell** said.

If the tentative rate is approved, a homeowner whose house is appraised at \$100,000 - after the \$50,000 homestead exemption - would owe \$630 in yearly taxes.

Also, the proposed rate is lower than the preliminary \$6.80 rate the council approved Aug. 3. That rate, which is included in the proposed budget, includes an anticipated 5 percent water and sewer rate increase. The town has seen a decrease in consumption but a rise in costs because of the tough economy and resulting property foreclosures, **Campbell** said. The council voted Tuesday to hire WKDickson, an engineering consulting firm, to conduct a water and sewer rate study.

Also, the council approved a five-year capital improvement plan that includes about \$1.5 million worth of projects in the first year. Those early projects include a manatee observation deck at the water's end of Kingsley Avenue, paving and irrigation work at Magnolia Cemetery, improvements on **Campbell** Avenue and Dogwood Lane and ditch piping in the Montclair area.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
August 21, 2010

Former Orange Park councilman wants grand jury to look at town Ronald G. Raymond upset with handling of John Bowles' firing

Author/Byline: DEBRA W. BUEHN

A former Orange Park Town Council member plans to seek a grand jury investigation into how town business is conducted, including the less than five minutes the council took to fire longtime manager John Bowles. Ronald G. Raymond, who served as a councilman for several years in the 1980s, addressed the council Tuesday. He said he was not weighing in on whether Bowles should have been terminated, but that he did not like the "mechanics" of how the decision was made. "It is at best, bad form," he said. The council unexpectedly fired Bowles in a 4-1 vote at a special session July 28, charging him with failing to take action on allegations of improper behavior by the town's public works director and with a lack of responsiveness to the council and town residents. Council member Jim Renninger cast the lone negative vote, citing a lack of due process. Residents who listened to tapes of the action said it took the council just 4 minutes and 56 seconds to come to its decision - part of the mechanics Raymond said he found questionable. In a prepared letter presented to the council Tuesday, Raymond requested copies of "all communication" between council members, the town attorney and the interim town manager from Feb. 1 to Aug. 18. Raymond said he intended to deliver that information and other data he has collected to the state attorney and request a grand jury investigation and "recommendations in regard to the governance of the town of Orange Park." The council did not respond to Raymond's comments.

PAYOUT FOR BOWLES

Also Tuesday, the council approved an approximately \$88,000 payout for Bowles, including \$45,399 in retirement funds, \$35,812 for accrued sick leave and \$8,054 in vacation leave. The payout also includes a deduction of \$1,264 for repairs to the 2003 Chevrolet Tahoe Bowles used as his city vehicle; Bowles had already agreed to pay for the repairs. The council voted 4-1 to approve the benefits, with Renninger dissenting after being thwarted in his proposal to pay Bowles for all of his accumulated vacation pay. Bowles' total accrued vacation time amounts to about 510 hours, which would have cost the town \$25,592. The \$8,054 amount was proposed by interim Town Manager **Sarah Campbell**, who referred to the employee manual provision that retiring or resigning employees may cash out up to 20 days of accrued vacation. Even though the manual suggests that an "involuntary dismissed" employee "may forfeit all accrued leave," **Campbell** suggested the 20-day rule be followed.

In an interview Wednesday, Bowles said he remains "disappointed" in the council's actions, and had hoped he would receive all of his accrued sick leave. Bowles, who earlier wanted his "fired" status changed to "retired," said he is still considering legal action against the town. "I just don't know where to go from here," he said. In other action, the council voted 4-1 to raise **Campbell's** annual salary from \$53,473 to \$75,000 until a new manager is found. At that point, her salary would be \$58,000 a year as town clerk. Renninger voted against the measure.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
October 3, 2009

Property taxes stay same, town budget cut

Author/Byline: MARY MARAGHY

Orange Park officials called this year's budgeting process brutal. "These are tough economic times, and we just had to survive," said Town Councilman Steve Howard. "Homeowners should be happy. Citizens sent us a clear message that they didn't want to pay a fire assessment fee or higher taxes. So those are the paths we took." The council voted 5-0 Tuesday to approve a final tax rate equal to last year's rate - \$5.80 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The rate is lower than the rollback rate of \$6.10, the rate that would generate the same amount of revenue as last year. The council also mandated that no more than \$250,000 be taken from the town's reserve funds to balance the budget, forcing the town government to cut \$425,000. Town Manager John Bowles asked each department to cut their annual budgets. For example, Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell**, charged with trimming about \$18,000, is eliminating her part-time office worker, Carolyn Clark. The finance department will implement furloughs.

Police and fire, which have the largest budgets, are being hit hardest. Police Chief Jim Boivin, charged with slicing \$150,000 from his budget this year, said that originally, he felt cutting police officers was the only way. However, members of his department have proposed other options, which he said he will support if labor attorneys say they are legally doable. Police union representatives and the attorneys were scheduled to meet on the issue on Friday. Police officers voted, and agreed, they would give up new uniforms, dry cleaning service for their existing uniforms, college tuition reimbursement and overtime pay. The department's 22 officers and six dispatchers will also take one 12-hour shift per month without pay, or furloughs. That's 144 hours per employee a year, for a total of 4,032 man-hours annually, which will save about \$89,000, Boivin said - about 6.9 percent of the department's salary allotment. Boivin said typically he has three or four officers on duty at all times. The furloughs will mean three officers at all times, he said. Fire Chief Ty Silcox said he had already cut uniforms and dry cleaning for his 20 firefighters. He has yet to figure out how to cut \$101,000 more. "Right now I'm looking at cutting personnel," he said. "That amounts to two or three positions cut."

Mayor Jim Renninger said Tuesday he will form a committee to proactively research ways to make the town more cost-efficient in the future. Among considerations, he said, one could be having residents make online payments to save on postage, cutting garbage pickup from twice a week to once and switching to energy-saving light bulbs. "On the other side of the equation," Renninger said, "inflation is down. Costs are down. People are hungrier for work. People are buying less, which means less garbage." Meanwhile, he said Orange Park residents should be pleased their taxes didn't go up, and they haven't gone up in years.

Tax rate	5.8 mills	Lower than last year	Budget cuts	-\$425,000
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Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Sarah Campbell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
September 5, 2009

Residents cheer failure of proposed fire tax

Author/Byline: MARY MARAGHY

A fired-up, standing-room only crowd cheered and applauded as the town's proposed fire service tax fizzled at Orange Park Town Hall Tuesday night. Following an emotionally charged three-hour public hearing, the Town Council voted 3-2 against levying a non-property tax to help fund the fire department. The proposed fee was about \$38 per 500 square feet for all property owners, including the Moosehaven Retirement Community, about 40 churches and other tax-exempt parcels. Gavel-banging Mayor Jim Renninger repeatedly asked the crowd not to clap or catcall, to no avail. The conversation even turned fire-and-brimstone for a while, as residents blasted officials for proposing to tax churches that host scout meetings and provide needy residents with food, clothing, rent and utility assistance and counseling. "You are going to come take from the offering plate of the Lord?" asked resident Mike Cannady. "Levy a tax on the cross of Christ?" said the Rev. William Randall. "You represent the root of all evil - the love of money."

Many residents chastised the council for not cutting operating expenses, as most households are doing during the economic downturn. Some suggested the town slash the July 4 fireworks program, disband the fire department or dissolve the whole town. Some have suggested town officials charge Moosehaven for its use of fire service, and Moosehaven officials said at Tuesday's meeting they would be willing to pay. However, there are no plans to pursue that avenue at this time, and that action is not on any agenda, Town Clerk **Sarah Campbell** said Wednesday. After the vote, once-frowning residents, nonprofit leaders and pastors left smiling. The Rev. Eric Jaffe, pastor of Journey Church on Blanding Boulevard, posted "Thank you Jesus," on his Facebook page.

Budget discussions will continue Wednesday, Sept. 16, at the 7:30 p.m. council meeting, said Town Manager John Bowles. The failure of the fee may result in a higher property tax rate and more budget cuts, he said Wednesday. If necessary, the town can pull from its \$5 million in reserves. "We're in real good shape as compared to other municipalities," he said.

The council recently adopted a tentative tax rate of \$7.60 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to support an \$8.4 million budget. Bowles had proposed a rate of \$6, but council members bumped it up to allow some wiggle room. Last year's rate was \$5.80. The tax rate and the budget is slated for a final vote at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 29.

Research Compiled by: Liliana Oberg
 Colin Baenziger & Associates



Section 6

Tandra S. Davis

*Fernandina Beach City Manager
Candidate Report*

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Cover Letter and Resume

Tandra Davis, MBA

Lake Wales, FL • 863)257-8153 • Tandradavis@yahoo.com

June 27, 2024

Recruiting Officer
Ron Williams
Scott Krim
Colin Baenziger
Recruit28@cb-asso.com

Dear CB- Associates Recruiting Team,

I am writing to express my sincere interest in the Town Manager position within the City of Fernandina Beach, Florida, as advertised. With a proven track record of leadership and achievement in municipal governance, combined with a passion for community development, I am confident in my ability to contribute effectively to the continued growth and success of the City of Fernandina Beach, Florida.

My journey to leadership began in Polk County, Florida, where I honed my skills and ambition before pursuing higher education at Strayer University and Warner University. Armed with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a specialization in Finance and a Master of Business Administration Degree with Distinction, I embarked on a career in the public sector, serving as a Finance Assistant for the City of Fort Meade, Florida, before advancing to the role of Finance Director for the Town of Dundee.

During my tenure with Dundee, I was entrusted with increasing responsibilities, culminating in my appointment as Town Manager in December 2020. Under my leadership, Dundee experienced unprecedented growth and development, including attracting new businesses, expanding utility infrastructure, and completing significant infrastructure projects. Notable achievements include spearheading the renovation of the Development Services Building and the Historical Train Depot, as well as implementing strategic initiatives such as the Fire Assessment program and expanding the water permit.

I have a proven track record of establishing meaningful relationships and collaborating with stakeholders to drive positive change. My involvement in various boards and affiliations such as Polk County Career Academies Advisory Board, Marquis Who's Who of America, The Board List, Strayer University Alumni Association, Warner University Alumni Association, ICMA-International City and County Managers Association, FCCMA-Florida, GFOA Government Financial Officers Association, Florida League of Cities, NACA and the

Section 6

Black Caucus of GFOA speaks to my commitment to community engagement and development. My dedication to excellence has been recognized through multiple governmental awards, including the GFOA Distinguished Award and the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

I am excited about the opportunity to bring my unique blend of skills, experience, and passion for community development to Nassau County government. I am eager to discuss how my background and accomplishments align with the needs and goals of the City of Fernandina Beach, and I look forward to the possibility of contributing to its continued success.

Thank you for considering my application. I am available at your earliest convenience for an interview and can be reached at 863) 257-8153 or tandradavis@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,



Tandra Davis, MBA

Tandra Davis, MBA

Lake Wales, FL • 863)257-8153 • Tandradavis@yahoo.com

EDUCATION

Masters in Business Administration
Warner University
Lake Wales, FL
2020

Bachelors in Business Administration
Finance concentration
Strayer University
Tampa, FL
2018

SKILLS

Leadership

Strategic Planning

Communication

Financial Management

Problem Solving

CAREER SUMMARY

Accomplished Town Manager with 5+ years of leadership in Dundee, Florida, and over 25 years of expertise spanning finance, operations, and customer service. As one of the leaders in Florida's municipal system, I've spearheaded transformative initiatives, optimizing fiscal health and operational efficiency. Proficient in financial management, I've ensured responsible budgeting and resource allocation while streamlining administrative processes through adept data processing. My strategic approach to operations management has enhanced town services and infrastructure, prioritizing community needs and safety. By fostering transparent communication and responsive customer service, I've built trust and engagement with residents. Committed to driving tangible improvements, I will continuously strive to uphold the growth and prosperity within Florida's dynamic municipal landscape.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Town of Dundee
Town Manager

Dundee, FL
2020 – Current

- Spearheaded job growth initiatives, adding 15 new employees to the Dundee community by successfully transitioning from contracted services to in-house operations.
- Implemented strategic hiring of specialized personnel including special planners, operators, and water operations experts to enhance town planning and infrastructure management.
- Led efforts to upgrade town infrastructure, notably increasing the water permit and expanding water lines to support community growth and conservation plans.
- Directed the enhancement of existing water lines, ensuring reliability and efficiency in water distribution systems to meet the needs of a growing population.
- Prioritized employee development through upskilling initiatives, equipping staff with the necessary skills and agility to navigate the town's evolving development processes.
- Fostered a culture of collaboration and innovation, encouraging teamwork and creative problem-solving to address town challenges effectively.
- Established and maintained partnerships with local stakeholders, fostering community engagement and ensuring alignment with town development goals.

Section 6

- Demonstrated strong fiscal management, optimizing town resources and budgets to support sustainable growth and stability.
- Acted as a liaison between town government and residents, promoting transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness in governance and decision-making processes.
- Championed comprehensive planning efforts, overseeing the development and implementation of long-term strategies to guide the town's growth and development.

Town of Dundee

Dundee, FL

Interim Manager

2020-2020

- Successfully served as Interim Town Manager for 5 months, gaining valuable firsthand experience in town management responsibilities and operations.
- Engaged in comprehensive planning and operational studies, analyzing current town processes and identifying areas for improvement to better prepare for the transition to the permanent Town Manager role.

Town of Dundee

Dundee, FL

Finance Director

2019-2020

- Supervised and managed Finance staff, overseeing general ledger preparation, accounts payable processing, and budget preparation, ensuring compliance with GAAP and relevant regulations.
- Established and enforced town-wide financial policies and procedures, including fiscal reporting, accounting methods, and debt administration, while overseeing the design and implementation of centralized financial systems.
- Coordinated annual audits, reviewed audit reports, and implemented corrective actions as needed, while administering the town's bonding program and developing long-term debt management plans in alignment with federal, state, and local regulations.
- Provided strategic guidance and direction to department heads and staff, ensuring effective implementation of fiscal policies and programs to support the town's objectives.
- Conducted financial impact analyses and prepared fiscal notes on leases, contracts, and resolutions, offering recommendations for approval or modification to enhance financial efficiency.

City of Fort Meade

Fort Meade, FL

Finance Assistant Director

2017-2019

- Managed and supervised all financial transactions, accounts payable, and accounts receivable processes for the city, ensuring accuracy and compliance with financial regulations.
- Supported the preparation of the city's financial reports within the accounting and finance system, following directives from the financial director to maintain consistency and accuracy.
- Maintained, updated, and retrieved financial data from the city's database and systems, ensuring accessibility and integrity of financial information.
- Processed biweekly and monthly payroll for city employees, ensuring timeliness and accuracy in accordance with established policies and procedures.
- Oversaw daily operations of utility billing, deposits, and financial transactions, ensuring efficient and effective service delivery to residents and stakeholders.
- Prepared and finalized monthly, quarterly, and yearly financial statements, providing insights into the city's financial performance and status.
- Conducted monthly reconciliation of bank statements to ensure accuracy and integrity of financial records.

Section 6

- Compiled and prepared actuarial reports for submission to the State of Florida, adhering to regulatory requirements and deadlines.
- Reviewed and processed weekly accounts payable transactions, verifying accuracy and completeness of invoices and payments.
- Assisted in coordinating internal and external audits, providing necessary documentation and support to auditors to ensure compliance and transparency.

Colorado Boxed Beef Company

Lakeland, FL

Account Payables Lead Specialist

2015-2017

- Managed accounts payable functions for over 600 vendors across multiple companies, ensuring accurate and timely processing of invoices and payments.
- Supervised and trained a team of 5-6 accounts payable specialists, providing leadership and guidance to optimize team performance and efficiency.
- Successfully navigated yearly audits for customers, maintaining compliance with audit requirements and demonstrating accuracy and transparency in financial processes.
- Provided weekly reports to prioritize communication with "Hot vendors," fostering strong vendor relationships and timely payment processing.
- Managed multi-million-dollar accounts, handling inquiries, payments, and reconciliations with meticulous attention to detail and accuracy.
- Monitored freight on product accounts, ensuring accurate accounting and cost allocation for transportation expenses.
- Identified and corrected payment discrepancies, adjusting for overbilling or invoicing errors to maintain accurate financial records.
- Indexed invoices into the DocuWare system, facilitating efficient document management and retrieval processes.
- Processed 125-200 accounts payable transactions daily, maintaining high levels of productivity and accuracy to meet operational demands.

Helping Hands Marketing & Services

Lakeland, FL

Office Manager | Accounting | Payroll | Account Receivables – Payables

2012-2015

- Provided tax services to 1200 individuals and businesses, ensuring compliance with federal tax laws and regulations.
- Managed general ledger accounts, including overseeing the establishment and maintenance of yearly budgets and the processing of accounts receivable and accounts payable transactions.
- Conducted internal audits, reconciled general ledger accounts, and prepared monthly/quarterly reports for forecasting and year-end projections.

Care Medical of Georgia

Atlanta, GA

Bookkeeping | Competitive Bidding | Payroll Manager | Purchasing Agent

2005 – 2011

- Delivered tax services to 1200 individuals and businesses, ensuring adherence to federal tax laws.
- Oversaw general ledger accounts, managing yearly budgets and processing accounts receivable/payable.
- Conducted internal audits, reconciled accounts, and prepared reports for forecasting and year-end assessments.

References available upon request

Candidate Introduction

Tandra S. Davis

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration, Warner University (FL)
Bachelor of Science, in Business Administration Finance Concentration, Strayer University (FL)

EXPERIENCE

Town of Dundee	2019 – present
City of Fort Meade, Fort Meade Florida	2017 – 2019
Colorado Boxed Beef Company, Lakeland Florida	2015 – 2017
Helping Hands Marketing & Services, Lakeland Florida	2012 – 2015
Care Medical of Georgia, Atlanta Georgia	2005 – 2011

BACKGROUND

The Town of Dundee is the primary business of the agricultural hub in central Florida. It is a small community with a population of 6,700 residents surrounded by lemon and orange groves. The Town of Dundee is one of many in beautiful Polk County, which is the home of 800,000 residents. Polk County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state and Dundee has been placed on the radar for one of the fastest growing communities within the county. The expectations of 2,500 new homes within the next two and half years, taking the population from 6,700 to 16,125 residents.

Town of Dundee's General Fund budget is approximately \$6,000,000 and the total budget is approximately \$14,000,000. This projection excludes major capital projects which include water expansion projects, special projects such as road expansion and improvements. The town has 78 employees with seventeen departmental divisions led by twelve directors. The town has most recently taken ownership of three new departments which were initially contracted out prior to new management. That includes – Planning (Development Services), Code Compliance Division and Sanitation/Solid Waste. All new departments brought in an additional 14 staff members.

The three most significant issues facing the town are:

- Drinking Water Shortage. The county overall has experienced a significant impact due to growth which has created a shortage in drinking water. The county recognized this shortage some years ago and they created a cooperative named Polk Regional Water Conservation which will allow each city to join the water supply of the county. This project has been in process for years with an expected availability in 2027. The cost

Tandra S. Davis

associated with the PRWC water demand will cost millions of dollars. However, the town has been planning for this shortage and setting aside funds to help capitalize on this effect.

- Arterial roadways. The Town of Dundee has two major road networks that travel through the community. US Hwy 27 and US Hwy 17 are overcrowded and need expansion and improvements. As we prepare for the 2,500 additional homes with an additional 9000 residents, we are needing road improvements and even connectors to help reduce conjunctions from the main arterial roadways. We began the planning and development of connector roads to help redirect traffic to these main roads with less impact.
- Staffing shortage. As the town continues to grow and planned for the growth, we find ourselves short staffed to accommodate the incoming growth. As we have hundreds of hours of planning and consultancy work being done to prepare for the new home, we find that we are short-staffed. Once the new home and the tax bases are in place, we know we will have the ability to grow as a team, but until that happens, we will be working in transparency.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

Fernandina Beach is a beautiful blend of welcoming and friendly residents with a large touch of exciting tourists. This city has the unique historical appeal that continually sets them apart from other local beach communities. Being a pillow community for numerous events, such events allow this community to be as inviting as any other along the coast. During my research, I would say Fernandina Beach is one of the safest in the state. Between Amelia Island and Fernandina Beach, they continue to make the Top 10 List of beaches and islands to visit. As I observe the future needs of this community, I believe I can bring a unique collaborative approach and solution to help take this community to its full potential.

The unique management style that has set me aside from any other managers has been a collaboration of transactional, coaching, and charismatic blend. This is because the transactional allows me to evaluate with a positive rewarding act with a mentor aspect to foster balance. Also, a coach approach which recognizes individuals' strengths and weaknesses and allows me to assist by fostering teammates and teamwork culture. Lastly, my charismatic approach allows my more charming, inspiring, and motivating style to blend and bring a crafting balance to continue to be firm but cultivating as a manager.

My current and former employees I have worked with have allowed me the opportunity to grow personally and professionally. Work relationships are important to foster. Understanding the needs of the community, level of service and the expectations of the residents requires adaptability within the structure of the organization. Often the needs of the workforce change from the needs of the employees. Keeping this in mind may require a culture adjustment to occur. Such changes may require staff adjustments which may reflect terminations. Whilst this is certainly not the enjoyable part of the job it is crucial as it relates to maintaining the success of the town. I advocate for employees and if there is an individual departing from the team, I will

Tandra S. Davis

do my very best to set them up for success.

My staff would say I am a firm but fair manager. I am always open to listening to their needs and their wants. Often, we may not be able to accommodate their wishes but at least we were engaged with their thoughts. The elected officials I have had the privilege of working with would likely say that I am highly competent, ethical, fair, dedicated, and persuasive. Dundee's governing board sees me as a visionary manager who will go above and beyond to get it done. Keeping their vision in our work has been most effective.

My greatest strength would be a combination of managing our town's budget and orchestrating special projects with a good vision from the governing board. Most recently I took a parking area at our Development Services Building that sat between the Post Office and the main commuting road and created a veteran's memorial park. This park has a gorgeous monument with a flag display that is surrounded by a beautiful garden of trees and plants. This area has multiple sitting benches for our veterans to come and enjoy a space of their own. This area has set a memorable vision that we call "Centennial Park". This park was a park of choice for our centennial year.

In terms of weaknesses, I am extremely critical of my own work. I take complete ownership of the failures of projects and issues that may arise. I take all matters personally as it relates to the strategic plan and pushing initiatives forward. I feel that keeping a positive attitude whilst also assessing the downfalls within certain projects is crucial to make better choices for the community moving forward. I will always strive to be the very best, however this comes with a great deal of responsibility for myself and my team members.

I have some proud moments in Dundee by the leadership displayed by the termination of outsourced sanitation throughout the town. When I began my tender here in Dundee, the town was absolutely eye soring. The sanitation company was providing the worse services ever. They became very complex and lazy with the level of services being provided to the town. Management placed this vendor on an action plan that gave them 45 days to clean up the trashy environment that they allowed to become acceptable in our town. After the failure to comply occurred, the town gave them 60 days' notice to terminate. Within that time frame, management was put on a short task to get a team together and lease some trucks. We were told it could not happen. We were told we would fail. The town has become a beautiful place that we now admire. This allowed the town staff to take value in the services we now render and allows us accountability of actions and a greater level of service.

In "Areas of Opportunity" not necessarily mistakes. We had a large group of residents that came in with concerns about speeding within a busy residential road. We encouraged the community to partake in a budget workshop to help voice their opinions for the needs within their community. The town has a large community park that is centered in the middle of this busy road. Midway from one major connector road and connecting to another. Most concerns came from parents warned of their kids being struck by a vehicle that would often speed up and down

Tandra S. Davis

this community. During a town budget workshop, many residents attended requesting speed humps. After further review, the town agreed and placed speed humps primarily around the area of the park where the kids crossed to enter the entrance of this community park. I can recall the day we installed these speed humps. There were just as many angry residents who felt the town was being wasteful with town funds. It began an outcall even to other neighborhoods who wanted the same bumps added to their community. Moving forward, we did add more humps to other neighborhoods, however we did community workshops and advertised them to make sure we had as much participation as possible. We wanted to make sure the outreach was significant prior to making the decision for the neighborhood. This helped change the narrative of the stories for each community had different options and the outcome was different in some areas compared to others.

The challenges I see facing the City of Fernandina Beach are:

- Review opportunities with the governing board and utilities department pertaining to water quality. It was mentioned most recently that residents are concerned about the possible health impact of the quality of the water within the community. I believe completing an analysis or study to help the organization understand its water quality is very important to the stakeholders within the community and future.
- As mentioned, many residents and stakeholders are concerned with the development. Especially surrounding the fragile barrier island. To make sure that the organization keeps the unique character of the city, it would be wise to analyze the potential growth and development of the community with the voices of the community. This would require some unique and strategic planning on how to move forward. Smart growth is the best growth.
- Infrastructure is another concern that is very important in our entire state. Reviewing opportunities to rebuild, expand or update facilities could be extremely costly. Seeking some grant opportunities to help facilitate the future needs of the beautiful community would be most effective.
- Analyzing and reviewing the correct resources related to various departments' efficiencies. Review areas of improvement to help the departments operate more efficiently and effectively.
- Review partnerships to help stimulate sustainable employment within the organization.
- Finally, continue to seek additional funding opportunities to enhance and improve all the beaches in the area.

During the first six months my efforts will involve:

- Looking over the strategic plan from an operational POV.
- Understanding the “gaps” and potential focus areas.
- Adapting to the strategic plan and encouraging dialog amongst the community.
- Meeting with elected officials, citizen groups, and churches to assess their concerns within the community.

Tandra S. Davis

- Meeting with directors of each department to help create or review their departmental portfolio that outlines the vision and goals for the year. Review the standards and expectations to see if they are aligned with the governing body and citizens.
- Assessing current performance measures that will be used to determine if staff and management are meeting organizational goals and the expectations of our governing board.

I work well with the media and try to ensure accurate, quality coverage for our community. My personal appearance is professional but occasionally may be casual but business casual at the least.

I do not anticipate anyone contacting the city with negative comments or concerns about me except for a former elected official who has a decade-long conflict with this town's council and the direction they are taking the town.

In my spare time, I enjoy traveling and cooking with my family.

SIX ADJECTIVES OR PHRASES I WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE MYSELF

- Knowledgeable
- Highly Ethical
- Proactive
- Creative
- Nurturing
- Dedicated

REASON FOR DEPARTING CURRENT POSITION

Having evaluated my personal and professional goals recently, I have a large deserve for growth. I am looking forward to expanding my experience further. This opportunity will allow me the ability to rise above my current expectations and desires. Expanding my level of service within my community to a larger capacity. Giving myself the ability to excel on a professional level within my community.

CURRENT SALARY

My compensation at the Town of Dundee is \$112,750.

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
TANDRA SHERRAYE DAVIS**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search No Records Found

County

Polk County, FL No Records Found

DeKalb County, GA No Records Found

Fulton County, GA No Records Found

State

Florida No Records Found

Georgia No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:**County**

Polk County, FL **May 1997** – Lawsuit filed against Ms. Davis by
Lakeland Prop & Mgmt. Inc.
Disposition: June 1997 – Disposed by Judge

December 2015 – Lawsuit filed against Ms. Davis
by Carlton Arms of Winter Haven.
Disposition: September 2016 – Dismissed before
hearing.

**See page 16 for candidate explanation of records
found*

DeKalb County, GA No Records Found

Fulton County, GA **March 2010** – Lawsuit filed against Ms. Davis by
EPT of Athens.
Disposition: July 2013 – Dismissed W/O Prejudice

April 2009 – Lawsuit filed against Ms. Davis by
Portfolio Recovery.
Disposition: May 2013 – Dismissed W/O Prejudice

**See page 16 for candidate explanation of records
found*

Federal

Florida No Records Found

Georgia No Records Found

**Background Check Summary for
TANDRA SHERRAYE DAVIS**

Motor Vehicle

Florida

No Records Found

Credit

Excellent

Personal Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Sex Offender Registry

Not Listed

Education

Confirmed

EmploymentConfirmed, except for Care Medical of
Georgia, Atlanta, GA (2005 – 2011)**Social Media**

Nothing of Concern Found

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
TANDRA SHERRAYE DAVIS**

Tandra Davis, MBA

Lake Wales, FL • 863-257-8153 • Tandradavis@yahoo.com

May 7, 2024

Monique Rogers
Assistant VP for Operations
Colin Baenziger & Associates

Ms. Monique,

Thank you for the copy of the American Databank Report that was retrieved on behalf of the Dougherty County position which I applied for employment.

There were a couple of records that require follow-up, which I am happy to express.

Civil County Search 605.b.3 Polk County 125296627

- In 1997, I resided at 1715 Fern Road in Lakeland Florida. I had a medical condition which required me to move back home to my parents in College Park Georgia. Unfortunately, the Property Management company was not happy that I needed to terminate my lease agreement with the organization, even with me relocating 450 miles away. They chose not to accept my request to terminate my lease. I was only 25 years old at the time. I should have hired an attorney to handle this situation but did not pursue that opinion at the time. This case was later dismissed by the judge.
- In 2013, I resided at 9370 Oxford Drive, Winter Haven Florida with a family member as a roommate. I made the purchase on my current home the 1st week of December 2015 which is when our lease was up. We turned in our keys at the end of the lease as discussed with leasing office, however; my roommate left two (2) large bags with giveaway items that were meant for goodwill and some automobile tires in a closet. We received a call from maintenance who notified us of the items left behind. Because we did not have keys and had turned in everything, we were told they would remove the items on our behalf because they could not allow us to enter the property after the planned exit. However, later that week we were told by maintenance that management filed an eviction notice because they did not want to be responsible for the items left behind. We informed management that we would remove the items left behind in error however, they said this is the procedures

**Background Check Summary for
TANDRA SHERRAYE DAVIS**

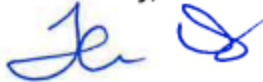
for items left behind even if we turned in the keys and had exited the property by the lease agreement. This case was later dismissed by the judge.

Civil County Search 605.b.3 Fulton County 125296691

- Case from April 15, 2009, there is a case with Portfolio Recovery vs Davis, Tandra 09VS159424. I have no idea what this civil case is related to. It's stated as an account, also that it was closed - dismissed shortly after it was opened. I have no information to share on this case.
- Case from March 29, 2010, there is a case with EPT of Athens vs Davis, Tandra 10VS176144. This was a contract case which was dismissed and closed W/O prejudice after a judge reviewed the facts, and the contract was settled by a mediator between both parties. The initial claim was frivolous and the buy-out of the contract was unreasonable. Once the facts were mentioned in detail, the judge encouraged the plaintiff to review their claim and possibly settle, which eventually happened.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the mentioned cases. I am available for additional questions if they arise. I can be reached at 863) 257-8153 or tandradavis@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,



Tandra Davis, MBA

**Background Check Summary for
TANDRA SHERRAYE DAVIS
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: Tandra S. Davis

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes ☐ No ☒
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes ☐ No ☒
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes ☐ No ☒
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes ☐ No ☒
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes ☐ No ☒
6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated?
Yes ☐ No ☒
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes ☐ No ☒
8. Please list links to all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one. facebook.com/tandra.phillips
instagram.com/tandrasdavis
9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes ☐ No ☒
10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

Attested to: _____

Jh S

Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via PDF DOCUMENT to Monique@cb-asso.com or via fax to (561) 621-5965 no later than 5:00 PM MST 04/17/2024.

(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes Tandra Davis

Steven Glenn – Vice Mayor, Town of Dundee, FL 678-571-3027

Mr. Glenn has known Ms. Davis since 2019. He served as a Commissioner throughout Ms. Davis' time working for Dundee, beginning with the position of Finance Director. When the Manager position became vacant, Ms. Davis was appointed as Interim Manager. She requested to be considered for the role of Manager, and the Commission soon approved her for the position.

Ms. Davis is a great leader. She is passionate about taking care of her employees. She communicates well with her staff and relies upon them for ideas and input to make decisions. Ms. Davis rallies her staff around the Town's vision, and she works alongside them as part of a team. She has also made several good choices when hiring personnel.

Ms. Davis' skill as a team leader is especially apparent during holiday events. While planning the Town's Christmas celebration, she held several staff meetings to brainstorm and plan. Her team recruited residents to participate and perform. They worked through problems, such as the ever-increasing number of toys needed for the Santa toy giveaway. Ms. Davis tasked each employee to oversee a different part of the celebration, such as the tree lighting ceremony, the parade, and the toy giveaway. Their well-thought-out plans resulted in a very successful event. Ms. Davis gave her staff credit for their creativity and hard work.

Ms. Davis works hard to keep her staff and elected officials informed of what is happening in her area of government. Ms. Davis manages to keep Mr. Glenn up to date, despite his frequent business trips. On one occasion, the Town had received complaints from residents about a private Independence Day celebration with fireworks and noise that lasted late into the night. Upon investigation, officials determined the party took place in a neighboring community outside of the Town's borders. When a resident confronted Mr. Glenn about the issue on the day he returned from a business trip, he was grateful that Ms. Davis had made him aware of the problem so he could respond appropriately.

Ms. Davis is very active in the community. When she applied for the position of Manager, Mr. Glenn was initially concerned because she did not live in Dundee. The Town had previously had negative experiences with managers who were not residents. Ms. Davis would not relocate, but she convinced the Commission that it would not be a problem because she lived within a ten-minute drive of the Town's borders. She committed to attend events and meetings. The Commission agreed to give her a chance as Manager, and they have not regretted this decision. Ms. Davis has kept her promise. She participates in events, including events that are not sponsored by the Town. She attends all her required meetings, and she has even attended school board meetings in Mr. Glenn's place.

Ms. Davis is innovative. When planning Dundee's Christmas parade, she suggested that they hold the event in the evening instead of during the day. Residents were concerned about the change because the parade had been done the same way for 30 years. Ms. Davis pushed the Commission to try it, and the parade was a great success. They had a greater turnout, and the

Reference Notes

Tandra Davis

lights in the parade were more visible and attractive. Since that year, other towns have followed their example.

Ms. Davis solves difficult problems. On one occasion in Dundee, an issue arose with a property owner who had violated zoning ordinances. His property was located in a business district, but he was renting it out for truck storage. The owner confronted Ms. Davis about the fine. He was a former Town Commissioner and felt he should not be penalized. He made personal attacks on her. However, Ms. Davis stood her ground and enforced the rules.

Ms. Davis interacts well with members of the public. When residents approach her with a complaint, she calms them down. She meets with them to understand the problem and goes out of her way to observe the issue for herself in the community. Then she reports her findings to the Commission and works toward a solution. In this way, Ms. Davis has often resolved problems to residents' satisfaction.

Ms. Davis meets expectations when it comes to completing tasks in a timely manner. She makes wise choices about which task to work on first, despite the conflicting opinions of the Town's five Commissioners.

Ms. Davis works well under pressure. When she feels stressed, she temporarily removes herself from the situation and takes time to think. Then she returns to her work with renewed energy. Mr. Glenn has no knowledge of any significant controversy involving Ms. Davis. Nothing in her background or conduct would concern a citizen or an employer.

Mr. Glenn does not want to lose Ms. Davis. However, he realizes that this is a great opportunity for her. Ms. Davis will do great as City or County Manager, provided she finds the right fit.

Words or phrases used to describe Tandra Davis:

- Communicator,
- Outgoing,
- Positive,
- Friendly,
- Creative, and
- Financially adept.

Strengths: Skillfully leads staff, creative problem solver.

Weaknesses: Takes things too personally at times, blames herself.

**Reference Notes
Tandra Davis**

Bruce Lyon - President, Winter Haven Economic Development Council, FL 863-529-6701

Mr. Lyon has known Ms. Davis since 2022. Mr. Lyon is President of Winter Haven Economic Development Council (EDC). Winter Haven is close to Dundee, where Ms. Davis serves as Manager. They have worked together to improve and develop the Town's economy.

Mr. Lyon is very impressed with Ms. Davis for her bold creativity in improving her Town. Ms. Davis recognized that Dundee needed assistance with economic development. Though Winter Haven EDC was designed to exclusively serve the City of Winter Haven, Ms. Davis approached Mr. Lyon for help. Mr. Lyon embraced the opportunity to work with her, and the City of Dundee became a member of the Council. Ms. Davis is devoted to the partnership and is sincere in her efforts to create strong relationships between the EDC and Dundee's Town Council. The alliance has benefited both parties. The EDC plans to lease a building in Dundee in the near future.

Ms. Davis is a creative problem solver. She acknowledges the organization's weaknesses and finds innovative ways to improve. In Dundee, she realized that growth was inevitable, and the Town needed strategies to guide development in a positive manner. She also knew they had limited resources and needed to find nontraditional ways to fill the community's needs. She recognized the value of Winter Haven Economic Development Council and pursued a relationship, despite its unusual nature. To date, Dundee is the only neighboring community that has asked Winter Haven EDC for assistance.

Ms. Davis is a team player. She unites her staff around a common purpose. She is easy to work with and communicate with. She thoroughly briefs her employees about projects and events, and she helps maintain a continuity of communication between departments.

Ms. Davis makes good hiring decisions. She resists the urge to hire a candidate before fully considering the consequences. She accepts that sometimes it is best to postpone hiring someone until the situation is right.

Ms. Davis spends a great deal of time in the Town. Even though she does not live in Dundee, she attends town and community events, and is often heavily involved in planning and running them. Among the town events she has helped organize are Days in the Park, concerts, and downtown retail nights. She also goes to church events, though it is not her own congregation.

Ms. Davis is a great communicator. When considering economic development, she seeks community input to ensure the Town will grow in an acceptable manner. She keeps her colleagues informed of what is happening in her area of responsibility.

Ms. Davis performs well during stressful situations. She does not become emotional in public. During Commission meetings, she calmly handles difficult questions. She explains situations to the Commissioners and asks how they would like her to address the problem.

Reference Notes Tandra Davis

In addition to her many other talents, Ms. Davis has an excellent understanding of finance. She also completes tasks in a timely manner.

Ms. Davis has not been involved in any controversy to Mr. Lyon's knowledge. He is not aware of any negative press or drama connected to her role in Dundee. Nothing in her behavior or conduct would prevent her from serving honorably in a local government position.

Mr. Lyon highly recommends Ms. Davis. She is a great Manager, one of the best in the County.

Words or phrases used to describe Tandra Davis:

- Sincere,
- Forward thinking,
- Fiscally responsible,
- Politically astute,
- Honest, and
- Thoughtfully concerned about the community.

Strengths: Sincere, willing to work hard for the community.

Weaknesses: Does not have a great depth of experience in some areas of city government.

**Tracy Mercer – Public Utilities Director/Special Projects Director, Town of Dundee, FL
863-370-2996**

Ms. Mercer has known Ms. Davis since 2022. After completing her service as a Commissioner for Winter Haven, Ms. Mercer applied for a position in Dundee, where Ms. Davis serves as Manager. Ms. Davis hired her as the Director of Public Utilities and Special Projects. Ms. Mercer is impressed with Ms. Davis for her level of knowledge. Ms. Davis thrives in the position with comparatively little experience.

Ms. Davis is a great manager. She rallies her employees around the Town's vision. She organizes staff to help them achieve their best work. She recognizes talent in her employees and encourages them to seek more education and advance in their careers. Ms. Davis knows each member of her staff on a personal level. They feel comfortable having a conversation with her. Ms. Davis also makes good hiring decisions. She directs candidates to the right place in the organization.

Ms. Davis has excellent financial skills. She has a great deal of experience in financial roles, including serving as the Town's Finance Director. As Manager, she is still heavily involved with the Town's financial management. The Town does not currently have a Finance Director, so she

Reference Notes

Tandra Davis

continues to perform that role. She reviews department budgets and presents them to the Commission. She also compiles the Town's annual budget.

Ms. Davis is innovative whenever possible. In Dundee, she initially encountered some resistance from staff members concerning some changes she wanted to make. However, those employees have since left the organization, so she can implement her plans with fewer obstacles.

Ms. Davis is a good communicator. One of her strengths is speaking to members of the public, both one-on-one and in a group. She also does a good job of keeping her staff and colleagues up to date. After each commission meeting, she meets with her staff to talk about what went well, what problems were discussed, and how they can help solve them. In addition to attending commission meetings, she meets with Commissioners individually to keep them informed of what is happening in her area of government.

Ms. Davis is very involved in the community. She spends time among the public, attending almost every meeting and event. She is personable, positive, and charismatic, which helps her develop positive relationships with residents. She has a great deal of energy. If someone needs a task completed, they can rely upon her to accomplish it in a timely manner.

Ms. Davis works hard to resolve conflicts. In Dundee, one of the Commissioners is new and inexperienced. She blames Ms. Davis for not giving her enough education and information. Ms. Davis has made a special effort to meet with her one-on-one to explain issues and educate her.

Ms. Davis handles the stress of her position well. She does not display feelings of anxiety in public. In private, she has healthy techniques for relieving tension. Sometimes she discusses problems with Ms. Mercer because she is the oldest and most experienced person in the organization. Ms. Mercer offers her support and counsel. On other occasions, she goes home for an hour to collect her thoughts and calm down before returning to work.

Ms. Mercer is not aware of anything in Ms. Davis' conduct or background that would concern an employer. Ms. Davis has not been involved in any controversy to Ms. Mercer's knowledge.

Ms. Mercer does not want Ms. Davis to leave Dundee, but she deserves a chance to advance. Ms. Davis is ready for a new challenge. She will make a great City or County Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Tandra Davis:

- Innovative,
- Persistent,
- Knowledgeable,
- Creative,
- Energetic, and
- Driven.

Reference Notes Tandra Davis

Strengths: Observant, productive, personable.

Weaknesses: Could learn more about city government, less experienced.

Bobby Green – Former Manager, City of Auburndale, FL 863-450-7165

Mr. Green has known Ms. Davis since 2019. Mr. Green was the Manager of Auburndale, which is close to Dundee, where Ms. Davis serves as Manager. They met through monthly meetings of local government officials in Polk County, Florida. When they met, she was the Town's Finance Director. He gave her advice about securing the promotion to Manager, which she did successfully. Mr. Green is very impressed with Ms. Davis and her work.

Ms. Davis is active in the wider community surrounding Dundee. She regularly attends meetings of the Polk County group of municipalities. She is also a member of the Ridge League of Cities, an organization of 24 municipalities within six neighboring counties. She has even helped organize events for the League.

Ms. Davis works well as part of a team to solve problems. One of the problems she worked on was a shortage of water throughout Polk County. She joined other Managers in the County to propose a transition from wells to extracting water from deeper in the aquifer. The project would cost hundreds of millions of dollars and result in an increase in customers' water rates. Ms. Davis was a driving force for the initiative in Dundee. She explained and promoted the initiative to the Commissioners. She has been one of the most helpful and communicative Managers throughout the process.

Ms. Davis has great financial skills. Her background in finance has helped her to consider aspects of projects that others might overlook. While working with other Managers in Polk County to expand and improve water infrastructure, her financial expertise has proved invaluable. The other Managers rely on her perspective.

Ms. Davis communicates well. While working on the Water Initiative, she did not hesitate to reach out to other Managers in the County, despite being a relative newcomer to local government. She clearly communicated her needs.

Ms. Davis is a good leader. She is well-liked by her staff. She also makes good hiring decisions. To accommodate Dundee's growth, she has hired 12 or more employees. Mr. Green has heard no complaints about any of the staff she has hired.

Ms. Davis manages stress well. Despite the stressful nature of her position, she never appears overwhelmed in public. Mr. Green is not aware of any controversy involving Ms. Davis. Her background and conduct are appropriate for a person in her position.

Reference Notes

Tandra Davis

Ms. Davis is an excellent Manager. She has stepped up to the volatile challenges of a small community. If Mr. Green needed someone for a management role, he would not hesitate to call on her. She will make a great manager for a city or county.

Words or phrases used to describe Tandra Davis:

- Friendly,
- Efficient,
- Likeable,
- People person,
- Timely, and
- Strong in finances.

Strengths: People person.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Sandra Chavious-Williams – Program Delivery Manager, Federal Emergency Management Agency, FL 689-278-0957

Ms. Chavious-Williams has known Ms. Davis since 2023. As a Program Delivery Manager for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Ms. Chavious-Williams works with Ms. Davis on matters involving emergency management in Dundee. They work well together, both in the office and out in the community.

Ms. Davis is easy to work with. She communicates clearly with her staff and colleagues, explaining her expectations and confirming information. When collaborating with a colleague, she defines her part of the project and their part, as well as her needs and their needs. She answers questions well. She is also timely, organized, and focused on her work.

Ms. Davis fosters a team atmosphere among her staff. Her employees work together in a cooperative and cohesive manner. They have a common goal, and each member of the team does their part to achieve it. She spends time in the community. She attends and helps organize events. She gets along well with members of the public.

Ms. Davis is innovative. When a problem arose concerning the safety of a bridge in Dundee, she came up with a creative solution. Her idea will continue to ensure safety in the future. She has a good understanding of finance. When asked a financial question, she gives competent, detailed responses.

Ms. Chavious-Williams knows of no controversy involving Ms. Davis. Nothing in her background or conduct would concern an employer.

Reference Notes Tandra Davis

Ms. Davis will make a great City or County Manager. Her knowledge and her ability to multitask enable her to complete projects and improve her community. Her interpersonal skills allow her to work with a wide variety of people, so she will thrive in a variety of organizations.

Words or phrases used to describe Tandra Davis:

- Joyful,
- Good team leader,
- Inspiring,
- Creative,
- Attentive, and
- Communicates clearly.

Strengths: Professional, knowledgeable, great at multitasking.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Trevor Douthat – Town Clerk/IT Director, Town of Dundee, FL 863-438-8330 ext. 258

Mr. Douthat has known Ms. Davis since 2020. In his capacity as Town Clerk and IT Director, he reports directly to Ms. Davis. She is an outstanding Manager.

Ms. Davis has a good rapport with her employees. She is compassionate, fair, and willing to listen to their ideas. She shares her vision for the Town and involves her employees in working toward it. She is not harsh, but she expects her staff to get things done. She works alongside them as often as possible. She keeps her employees informed. She holds weekly meetings to discuss her and her staff's goals, tasks, and needs. They meet more frequently when the need arises.

Ms. Davis makes excellent decisions when hiring personnel. When she took the position of Manager in Dundee, she encountered problems with the staff. She hired new employees who were qualified and wanted to work. She also considered whether candidates would work well with the existing staff. Her efforts have helped to establish a team atmosphere in the organization.

Ms. Davis is innovative. In Dundee, she created new processes to replace those that were out of date. She helped the Town transition to digital methods instead of manual. When she noticed that workflow was choppy between departments, she introduced ways to streamline the process. One of her greatest accomplishments in Dundee was the introduction of new community events, such as a monthly Market Day. Additionally, as part of the Town's centennial celebration, she helped organize an event for every month of the year.

**Reference Notes
Tandra Davis**

Ms. Davis is a problem solver. When she observed many cars speeding in a neighborhood with kids, she proposed the installation of speed bumps in the area. She promoted the idea to residents. Once the project was approved, she involved many Town departments in implementing the speed bumps and improving and landscaping the roadways.

Ms. Davis spends time in the community and attends community meetings. Her engaging personality enables her to have positive interactions with members of the public, in both group and individual settings. When residents become upset, she helps them calm down. She patiently explains the organization's decisions and helps them understand the necessity of certain actions.

Ms. Davis has excellent financial skills. She initially served as Dundee's Finance Director before being promoted to Manager. The Town does not currently have a Finance Director, so she still manages the Town's finances in addition to her responsibilities as Manager.

Ms. Davis handles stress well. When she feels overwhelmed, she pauses to take a breath before returning to work at full capacity. She works well under pressure, continuing to meet deadlines and maintain quality work.

To Mr. Douthat's knowledge, Ms. Davis has not been involved in any major controversy. Her background and conduct are appropriate for a person in local government.

Ms. Davis has done excellent work as Manager. Mr. Douthat recommends her for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Tandra Davis:

- Professional,
- Compassionate,
- Helpful,
- A born leader,
- Innovative, and
- Makes her employees feel like family.

Strengths: Works well with people.

Weaknesses: She is a perfectionist at times.

Marvin Arrington, Jr. - Commissioner, Fulton County, GA 404-313-5368

Mr. Arrington has known Ms. Davis since 2002. He met her through their children, who spent time together. In addition, Mr. Arrington is a partner at the Law Office of Arrington & Phillips, along with Mr. Phillips, the father of Ms. Davis' child. Beginning in 2010, Ms. Davis helped their firm with bookkeeping and taxes. Mr. Arrington appreciates Ms. Davis for her financial

Reference Notes
Tandra Davis

expertise, as well as her diligence and honesty. She met all his expectations during her time at the firm.

Ms. Davis is a good leader. She rallies her employees around the organization's vision. She also makes good hiring decisions. During her time at Arrington & Phillips Law Firm, she hired assistants, who proved themselves both qualified and competent.

Ms. Davis is innovative. If established methods do not produce the desired results, she searches for alternative ways to address and solve problems. On one occasion at Arrington & Phillips Law Firm, she introduced and helped implement new software which was invaluable in solving a difficult problem.

Ms. Davis communicates clearly. She keeps her employers informed of what is happening in her area of responsibility. She also interacts well with members of the public, in both individual and group settings. She does not hesitate to speak up, and she makes sure her audience understands her point. She does a good job of disagreeing with people without being disagreeable.

Ms. Davis cares about her community. She spends time working to improve it. For example, she volunteers with nonprofit organizations for children and youth. She manages stress well. She does not allow stress to become too much of a burden. Stress does not prevent her from completing tasks in a timely manner.

Mr. Arrington is not aware of Ms. Davis' involvement in any controversy. Nothing in her background or conduct would concern a citizen or an employer.

Ms. Davis has excelled during her many years of service in local government. She will make a great City or County Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Tandra Davis:

- Diligent,
- Competent,
- Thorough,
- Thoughtful,
- Polite, and
- Energetic.

Strengths: Diligent worker, does not hesitate to ask questions if she does not know something.

Weaknesses: Too committed at times, works even on the weekends. Needs to take more time to enjoy life.

Reference Notes Tandra Davis

Willie Quarles - Commissioner, Town of Dundee, FL 901-218-0866

Mr. Quarles has known Ms. Davis since 2019. He served as a Commissioner for Dundee when she accepted the position of Finance Director. He later recommended her for the position of Manager. Mr. Quarles appreciates the good work Ms. Davis has done as Manager. She has especially done a good job of managing issues related to the Town's growth. He consistently gives her five out of five points on her performance assessments.

Ms. Davis is innovative. In Dundee, she introduced new events as part of the Town's centennial celebrations. These events needed to spotlight the Town in some way. One of the events she created was Market Day, which is held once a month. She also helped organize parades for Independence Day and Christmas. She is an active leader. She enjoys working alongside her staff in the community. She also makes good hiring decisions.

Ms. Davis is a problem solver. On one occasion, a problem arose concerning a property with several code violations. Ms. Davis assembled a team of staff members and code enforcement officers to deal with the property owners. Then she worked with outside agencies to clean up the area.

Ms. Davis spends time in the community. She takes part in community activities and events, and she attends community meetings representing the Town. She makes good speeches on a variety of occasions. She is experienced with dealing with members of the public in a range of settings.

Ms. Davis strives to keep her colleagues updated on what is happening within the organization. She communicates with the Commissioners every week by means of a written report.

Ms. Davis is experienced with managing finances for large organizations. She is continually mindful of the Town's budget. Her expertise helped Dundee earn a plaque for outstanding finances after the yearly audit.

Ms. Davis responds well to stress. During difficult situations, she stays calm and explains the situation. She does not become angry or say anything out of character. When disagreements arise during Commission meetings, she clearly explains the codes and ordinances Commissioners should follow.

Mr. Quarles knows of no controversy involving Ms. Davis that would concern an employer or a member of the public. Though minor controversies routinely arise when residents disagree with the Town's decisions, Ms. Davis handles these situations gracefully, providing advice and recommendations. Her background and behavior are commendable.

Ms. Davis is ready for a new challenge. She will thrive in a larger organization with greater responsibilities. She will make an excellent City or County Manager.

Reference Notes
Tandra Davis

Words or phrases used to describe Tandra Davis:

- Approachable,
- Friendly,
- Considerate,
- Good listener,
- Calm in a crisis, and
- Productive.

Strengths: Management, innovation, community relations.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Prepared by: Claire Argyle
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://lakewalesdaily.com/2024/08/08/dundee-to-celebrate-grand-opening-of-johnson-dog-park-saturday/>
August 8, 2024

Dundee To Celebrate Grand Opening Of Johnson Dog Park Saturday

By: Maria Iannucci

Whether they get there on two legs or four, residents of Dundee and the surrounding area are invited to arrive for the grand opening of the city's public dog park this Saturday. Johnson Dog Park, located at 800 Edmund Ave., will be hosting its grand opening celebration on Sat., Aug. 10, from 10 AM – 2 PM.

The festivities will include a ribbon cutting to commemorate the official opening of the park to the public, as well as opportunities for residents and their pets to explore the park and its many amenities. Adoption opportunities will also be provided through Polk County Animal Control. While animals will not be presented on-site, official adoption forms will be made available for potential pet owners. The new park area includes various amenities for pets and owners alike, from benches and shade trees to dog tunnels, hoops, and a weight station.

Over the past two years, the City of Dundee has received requests from residents to designate a public space as a dog park for local pet owners, explained **Tandra Davis**, Town Manager.

As the town owned a vacant park area that was not being put to immediate use, the city decided to utilize that space to construct the proposed dog park, **Davis** said. "The dog park was an idea given by our stakeholders and residents," she said. "We had numerous residents who came to town city commission meetings over the last two and a half years request[ing] that we look into having a dog park for their loved ones."

While dog parks exist in most other cities within Polk County, the Town of Dundee wanted to create something unique to their community and its needs, said John Vice, Public Works Director. "I am trying to be different from other municipalities in other surrounding areas," he said. "We wanted to put ours on the map. We did not want it to be what you see going along the road. We wanted this to be different. It is an ideal concept. What can we do to reuse other products to build a dream factor while constructing this park." The Town of Dundee has nothing but high expectations for the new park and its grand opening. Residents have been asking for such a facility for a long time, and hopefully, this new public park will meet their needs.

Lita O'Neill, Town Clerk, owes the success of the park's construction to the support from the Town's various partners, including the Town of Lake Hamilton, the City of Davenport, Polk County Animal Control, and Odum Contracting. "We just want to welcome anyone who wants to come out and participate and that they bring their loved ones with them," said Town Manager **Davis**.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/dundee-considering-one-moratorium-development-215612752.html>
July 29, 2024

Dundee considering one-year moratorium on new development due to water shortage
By: Carla Bayron

DUNDEE, Fla. - A town in Polk County is running out of water and it may put a big 'stop' to new housing development. Dundee Mayor Sam Pennant says when he first moved to the town nearly 20 years ago, the housing developments you see now were all citrus groves. "It was quiet. Quaint. And then before you know it, it just exploded," said Pennant. "I guess the things that attracted me, attracted just about everybody else." The population was around 2,500 people back then. Fast-forward to now, and it has grown to 7,000. Developers build new neighborhoods and the town's infrastructure just can't keep up. The town isn't out of water right now, but it will be if it keeps developing at the fast pace it's going.

"Currently the town of Dundee is operating on a 917,500 gallons per day water permit and we're right at that. We're at 90% of our capacity, so we're figuring out how to move proactively with our developments coming in," said **Tandra Davis**, the Town Manager. To make sure they don't hit their limit, the town is considering a one-year moratorium on new builds so they can have more time to find solutions. In the meantime, they do have a plan in place.

"We have an interlocal agreement with Winter Haven where we'll be getting within the next 18 months another 500,000 gallons per day," said Pennant. The town also has an agreement with Polk County Water Co-Op that can provide another 500,000 gallons per day, and will be coming online in 2028.

Agricultural wells could also be transferred to their water permit, which could happen in the next six to nine months. "It was projected close to 5,000 new units that's possibly coming on and that's a big number," said **Davis**. "It was initially saying it could double our population, but it's going to be more than that. We're going to have to make sure we're looking at every avenue possible to prepare for that."

A draft ordinance will be presented during a Planning and Zoning Meeting on Thursday, August 15. Then town commissioners will have a first read of the ordinance at the end of the month.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Spectrum News Bay News 9
April 1, 2024

Is Dundee set to become a city? Voters will decide status

Author/Byline: Jeff Van Sant

The town of Dundee in Polk County has been growing over the years and some officials feel that it's time to recognize that growth and change its status to a city. The proposal also comes on the heels of celebrating the town's centennial. However, there are mixed feelings about the proposal, which will be up to the voters to decide. The measure is being put to the citizens to decide with a vote set for April 2.

Town Manager **Tandra Davis** said she was approached by some members of the community with the idea of changing the status to a city. She said she was intrigued. **Davis** also said others have pushed back and want their community to remain a town. "Dundee is a small family feeling community," **Davis** said. "The word city shouldn't change that, it shouldn't take the family out of our heart."

Davis also said that this is only a name change and there is no tangible impact going from town to city. However, there is pushback by some who say the community just isn't ready to move up from a town. One critic of the move is former mayor Joe Garrison. He runs several businesses around town and said the infrastructure for major growth needs to be in place first. "The population doesn't support it," Garrison said. "People don't support it. If it's not broke, don't fix it." Others, including council member Mary Richardson, agree with Garrison.

"I think it's a big deal," Richardson said. "I don't think we're ready for it and I don't think we have the infrastructure for it." Polls are open Tuesday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<http://digital.floridatrend.com/july-2023/page-114?m=28897&i=793712&p=116&pp=1&ver=html5>

Florida Trend
July 2023

Town of Dundee: Going with the Flow

Top of mind these days from Tandra Davis, manager of the town of Dundee, is pretty apparent: "How we're going to be able to handle the growth that's coming because it's coming; there's no way we'll be able to stop it. We just have to figure out how to embrace it, so we're working proactively, not reactively."

Located in the uber-vibrant U.S. 27 corridor, Dundee is a 12-square-mile area marked by the rolling hills of Lake Wales Ridge and a blend of older neighborhoods and new subdivisions. More housing is on the way, with as many as 2,500 new homes expected within the next five years. When developers come to explore Dundee, Davis says, "the first thing we have to look at is how much water do we have today, not what we're anticipating to have when it comes to the Polk County water co-op that's coming in five to seven years."



Historic Dundee Depot

With county growth a certainty, the Polk Regional Water Cooperative's role is to proactively identify alternative water resources and projects that ensure the future sustainability of the regional water supply.

Davis is optimistic, citing effective partnership with neighboring cities. Speaking about both water supply and government partnerships, she describes, "A lot of us have put in different systems that connect us to one another."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://flauditor.gov/pages/mun_efile%20rpts/2022%20dundee.pdf
May 30, 2023

The Town of Dundee, Florida
For the Year Ended September 30, 2022

To the Honorable Mayor, Members of the Town Commission and
Citizens of the Town of Dundee, Florida

We are pleased to present the Town of Dundee Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). This report addresses the Town's finances for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2022. The organization, form, and contents of this report, plus the accompanying financial statements and statistical tables, were prepared in accordance with the requirements of Governmental Accounting Standards Board, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, and the Governmental Finance Officers Association. In addition to meeting legal the requirements, this report also reflects the Town's commitment to full financial disclosure. We encourage you to thoroughly read the report and the important items it addresses. This report has been prepared by the Finance Department of the Town of Dundee, which assumes full responsibility for the completeness and accuracy of the information contained herein. To provide a reasonable basis for making these assertions, management established a comprehensive internal control framework designed to protect the Town's assets from loss, theft or misuse. Furthermore, the Town compiled sufficient reliable information for the preparation of the Town's financial statements in conformity with Accounting Principles Generally Accepted in the United States of America (U.S. GAAP). Because the cost of internal controls should not outweigh its benefits, the Town of Dundee's comprehensive framework of internal controls have been designed to provide reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance that the financial statements will be free from material misstatements. As management, we assert that, to the best of our knowledge and belief, the financial report is complete and reliable in all material respects.

State law requires that a complete set of financial statements reporting the Town of Dundee's financial position and results of activities be published within nine months of the fiscal year end. The Town has contracted with a licensed certified public accountant, Brynjulfson, CPA, to conduct the audit. The goal of the independent audit was to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements of the Town for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, were free of any material misstatements. The independent auditor concluded there was reasonable basis for rendering an unmodified opinion that the Town of Dundee's financial statements were fairly presented and in conformity with U.S. GAAP. The report of the independent certified public accountant is presented as the first component in the financial section of the report. U.S. GAAP requires management provide a narrative introduction, overview, and analysis to accompany the basis financial statements in the form of Management's Discussion and Analysis (MD & A). This letter of transmittal is designed to complement the MD& A and should be read in conjunction with it. The Town of Dundee's MD & A can be found following the report of the independent certified public accountant.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Town Organization

The Town of Dundee, Florida is a municipal corporation of the State of Florida, incorporated on December 16, 1924. Located in East Polk County, the 2021 population of Dundee was estimated to be near 5,616. Encompassing approximately 18 miles, the Town has been empowered to levy a property tax on real estate and personal property located within its boundaries. It has also been granted authority by State Statute to extend its corporate limits by annexation, which occurs periodically when deemed appropriate by the Town Commission. The Town of Dundee operates under Commission-Manager form of government. The Town Commission is the legislative body for the Town of Dundee and is made up of five residents elected by the Town voters, which are responsible for enacting ordinances, budget adoption, appointing committee members, and hiring the Town Manager, Attorney, and Auditor. The Town Manager, who serves as Chief Executive Officer, is responsible for carrying out the policies and ordinances enacted by the Commission and for the oversight of the day-to-day operations of the City. Furthermore, the manager is tasked with hiring the department heads of the various town departments.

The Town of Dundee is a full-service town and strives to provide exceptional customer service and quality of life for the community. Our community is a dynamic and attractive municipality characterized by a combination of residential and commercial developments. Services of the town include fire/rescue protection, water, wastewater, stormwater, roads and street maintenance, recreational and cultural activities, and general administrative services. Citizens enjoy the personalization of services provided by the town employees.

Local Economy

The current economic conditions, environment, and local indicators show an upswing in property values within the Town of Dundee. The housing market affects revenues greatly due to the tax base being mainly residential. Permit activity continues to grow, and new houses are being built throughout the city.

Long Term Financial Planning

Long-term financial planning requires the town to prepare a five-year capital improvement plan that identifies both capital improvements and related revenue sources. Capital requirements of enterprise operations are financed from capital reserves and from the users of the services through the fees. Additionally, capital requirements of the general fund operations are financed from the general fund revenues or reserve funds. Areas of new construction or capital costs associated with growth are funded with impact fees.

Currently, the unassigned fund balance in the General fund is \$2,380,274. The Town Commission and Town Manager continue to work on the needs of the community, while at the same time meeting the needs in a cost-effective and efficient manner. The following projects are planned for the next year and beyond:

- Capital Road/Sidewalk Improvement
- Continue expansion of the Development Services Division
- Continue the growth of our new Sanitation Department

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

- Leased of Sanitation Vehicles
- Purchase of multiple pieces of Stormwater Equipment
- Installation of Security Fences around town properties
- Replacement of Water Main Line at Lake Marie Blvd.
- Upgrade of Town's Water and Sewer Treatment Plants
- Seeking more grant opportunities for major projects

Major Initiatives

During the fiscal year 2022, the Town of Dundee achieved many significant accomplishments in furtherance of the goals and objectives established by the Commission, while securing the Town's infrastructure:

- Leased additional Sanitation Truck
- Two Additional Mowers
- Three additional town vehicles
- Renovated Historic Depot Museum
- Henderson Park Upgrades

Awards and Acknowledgements

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the Town of Dundee, Florida for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) for the fiscal year end of September 30, 2021. This was the fourth year the Town received this prestigious award. In order to be awarded a Certificate of Achievement, a governmental unit must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized ACFR, which satisfies both generally accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements.

A Certificate of Achievement is only valid for one year. We believe the current ACFR continues to meet the requirements and are submitting it to the GFOA to determine its eligibility for another certificate.

The in-house preparation of this report would not have been possible without the efficient and dedicated services of the entire staff of the Finance Department. Other Town departments, although not extensively involved in year-end audit activities, contributed significantly by ensuring the accuracy and integrity of accounting information compiled throughout the year. Without their diligence, the work of the Finance Department would have been considerably more difficult. As well as the town's internal CPA, Breanna Smith of White Paper Consulting, Inc. Appreciation must also be expressed to the Town's auditors, Mike Brynjulfson and Josh Haney of Brynjulfson, CPA whose suggestions and attention to detail enhanced the quality of this report.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tandra S. Davis, MBA, Town Manager

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

FCCMA News
November 3, 2022

Meet Tandra Davis, Town Manager, Town of Dundee
Author/Byline: SiteMGR

How long have you been a FCCMA member and why did you join?

I have been a member of FCCMA since late 2020. It is important that I network with other municipalities and governing bodies. This membership grants me access to seminars and workshops which ultimately provides me additional educational tools and knowledge to be successful in my Town and career.

Are you an ICMA member, why did you join, and how long have you been a member?

I am a member of ICMA. Just as the FCCMA, the ICMA gives me educational tools and workshops which sets me up for success. I am given the opportunity to service in various capacities to represent my Town. I have been a member ICMA since late 2020.

Please describe your areas of formal/advanced education.

I received my bachelor's degree in finance and my master's degree concentrating on management

Why did you select a career in public service?

I began my career in local government to influence and serve my local communities. Have you always been in the public sector or have you had experience in the private sector? I served in the private sector for most of my career. I began in the public sector a little over five years ago.

Please tell us about your current position and give a brief job description if you are not a City Administrator/Manager.

I am currently the Town Manager for the Town of Dundee in Central Florida on the US 27 corridor.

Please describe your typical day.

My day as a manager typically begins and ends with communicating amongst my staff, elected officials, project managers, and of course Dundee's wonderful Residents. My current focus has been dominated with the extraordinary growth within the Town. This includes monitoring our water/sewer and level of service for all of the current and potential new residents.

What is your favorite part of the job?

My favorite part of my job is public relations. Whether building or increasing relationships with Residents, Staff, Appointed Officials, Elected Officials, Developers, or new Businesses Owners my goal is to listen and work towards bettering the community. I am always looking to elevate my and the Town Staff's level of services, commitment, and dedication to the community.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

What is your least favorite part of the job?

My least favorite part of my job would be enforcing code compliance. As we all know, beautification and implications of rules is important in every aspect of a town. Addressing code issues can be difficult because of the “gray” areas- some Residents have financial challenges or other unusual dynamics. It seems to be constant evaluation of when to show grace and when to hold to the Town’s standard. We try to find creative solutions to help some of the Residents who are experience challenges outside of their control and connecting with local organizations who offer assistance in these circumstances-this has been essential to the success of many of our code issues.

If you are involved in any volunteer or leadership activities in your community, please share with us a bit about what you do and why it is important to you.

Member of Polk Vision which keeps me connected to the needs in my Town, the County, and the other Cities around us.

What is your most memorable experience on the job?

Months into my new position, the community challenged the Commission to hold the current 3rd party sanitation contractor accountable for the level of services being rendered. After constant evaluation and action plans with the company, they continued to not meet the level of service for the residents or commercial accounts. This resulted in canceling the contract and partnering with a wonderful company, RDK Trucking, to lease the necessary equipment to create our very own sanitation department which has made the sanitation for our residents a positive experience. The town overall looks better and is well maintained with a higher level of services needed without jeopardizing the integrity, health, and well-being of our community.

What are your hobbies/interests?

My hobbies and interests include cross word puzzles and watching the “oldie but goodies” TV shows like “Monk”, and naturally all of the hallmark classics and holiday shows.

If you could give one piece of advice to people interested in a career in public service, what would it be?

My advice to those entering a career in public service is to always keep an open mind. When planning projects, it is wise to have a plan “A” and a plan “B” (and sometimes a plan “C”, “D”, “E”, and “F”). Whenever you are making decisions, make sure you are making them on behalf of your community and not for yourself. Stop and ask, “SELF is this decision what is absolutely best for this community?” Have a good understanding that what is good in another community may not be a good fit for your community.

Who were your mentors and how have you passed this information down to other aspiring public administrators?

I have been blessed with multiple leaders who have mentored and even walked beside me in my career as a public servant. A few that have played a major role in shaping me and my career are Breanna Smith of White Paper Consultants; Fred Hillard, former City Manager of Fort Meade

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida; Deric Feacher, City Manager of Daytona Beach Florida; Ryan Taylor and Joe Halman, both Polk County Deputy Managers.

What career would you pick if you were to pick another?

My alternate career path would be an Accountant, CFO or Finance Director- as I mentioned, numbers have always been my friend.

Do you have a story you can share about how being a member of FCCMA has helped you or impacted you in a positive way?

My favorite story as a member of FCCMA is the most recent conference in Hollywood Florida. The keynote speaker spoke of a “bucket list” that he and a group of friends created. As they worked their own list, they began to add others bucket list items that they helped them achieve. Their adventure impacted numerous people around the world. His “Bucket List Adventure” inspired me to create an annual “Goal List” for myself- something beyond a New Year resolution. I am thinking of developing a way to implement this with my department heads. Each would make a list and select one or two that the whole team would rally around to complete that year. I feel this would give us all a sense of accomplishment, encourage teamwork, and pushing them all to dream. And, it would be a way for me to positively impact my team to help them complete a goal that is all about them and not me.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.facebook.com/townofdundee/posts/1346500739182227/>

Town of Dundee

March 31, 2022

Good morning Dundee. Here we are at the end of National Women's Month. I am honored to share a little something about myself. I absolutely love Dundee. I love my residents, my coworkers, my businesses and lastly, my commission. I will forever go to bat for the integrity of Dundee and the movement of Dundee in a forward direction. Thank you for allowing me to be your Town Manager and give you my entire 100%. 😊

Tandra Davis, I am the Town Manager. I am the mother of two wonderful adult children. I was raised in Polk County. I love to work and read love novels. I love to dedicate time for my church events. I work hard within my work community which is Dundee. I love to travel, especially going to visit my children. I have two dogs and one grand dog. I have been with the Town of Dundee for a little over two years. I absolutely love my job and my work family.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://www.midfloridanewspapers.com/winter_haven_sun/population-booming-in-dundee-industry-likely-to-follow/article_71663014-89b7-11ec-8132-0f6b1b7550ce.html
February 9, 2022

Population booming in Dundee, industry likely to follow

Author/Byline: Courtesy of the Central Florida Development Council

With 3,000 new homes anticipated to be built within the next three to five years, Dundee is experiencing the growth that's enveloping the eastern side of Polk County firsthand. And that's fine with Dundee Town Manager **Tandra Davis**, who said it's the best thing happening in the small town.

The population there has grown from about 3,700 people in 2010 to about 5,300 in 2020, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. **Davis** said people are drawn to Dundee, a 12-square-mile town east of Winter Haven, "for our attractive location – being so close to larger cities, yet still able to offer the small close-knit, family-town feel."

The city is meeting with existing developers and those new to the area monthly to brainstorm ways to bring new custom homes to the area, **Davis** said. "We are closely monitoring the details, such as the home sizes and code requirements of the homes and developments coming in. Our goal is to allow our residents to appreciate the growth that is coming and not worry about homes stacking up in an unpleasant way," she said. "We are working to keep the town unified and unique at the same time."

Davis said she anticipates the population to double in the next five to 10 years. "The current housing market is bringing huge development that we anticipate being complete in the five- to 10-year time span. As well, we are excited that the Highway 27 commercial district will also see new development growth, which will support the residential growth we are experiencing now and in the future." The small, rural area has plenty of room for expansion," **Davis** said. "Our steady increase in annexations and new development opportunities is showing incredible and positive growth for the town."

Business Growth

Along with houses, the town is working to attract new businesses – industrial, commercial and retail – to the community, she said. "Dundee is known best for its agriculture – we are surrounded by citrus," **Davis** said. But the town also has industrial land for sale. "I anticipate new businesses to come soon as the Highway 27/542 road project is completed. As the town manager, I am excited for the new businesses that we anticipate following the increase of homes in Dundee. The growth is also creating new jobs at Town Hall, which is exciting."

Davis said she touts growth when talking to businesses. "Be a part of our growth," she said, adding, "Dundee is growing heavily in a residential aspect, and with residential growth comes commercial growth. Let's make your company a part of the transition as we expand. Come grow with us!" That growth also brings challenges, and like almost every other city and town in Polk

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

County, drinking water is at or near the top of that list. “Drinking water is our most challenging concern,” she said. “Dundee is a participating member of the Polk County Water Cooperative Group and has a solid relationship with partnering cities nearby that act as a support team.”

The water cooperative is looking at regional solutions to the dwindling natural resource, trying to find ways to ensure the water supply supports future growth.

Ready to Visit?

Visitors to the town have plenty of options when it comes to things to do, **Davis** said. “Visit our Historical Train Depot and Museum, where you will learn the history of Dundee and surrounding cities,” she said. “Visit Davidson of Dundee, which has been in Dundee since 1967, and enjoy their famous citrus candies and chocolates.” She also suggests exploring the many beautiful lakes in Dundee to fish, walk and take photos. “Of course, do a restaurant hop to Dundee’s many local family-owned restaurants and food trucks with a variety of great eats that you do not want to miss.”

She also bragged about two things in the works:

“We are very excited for our two-year plan for a water splash pad, which should be in development soon.” We are currently in the design process for our Centennial Park, which will include artsy elements and many areas for beautiful pictures.”

The Future

Davis sums up her town and the next five years easily: “Although many of our projects are in the beginning stages, I believe that within five years, Dundee will be a prime location to live – especially since we are centered between the popular Lakeland, Winter Haven and Kissimmee, which puts us within arm’s reach of the LEGOLAND, Disney and Universal theme parks. I consider Dundee the ‘Crown Jewel’ of the Ridge of Polk County.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Tandra S. Davis** is listed below.]

https://townofdundee.com/download/agendas/2022_2/2022_town_commission/20220322-AMENDED-Town-Commission-Meeting-Agenda.pdf
MARCH 22, 2022

TOWN OF DUNDEE, FLORIDA
TOWN COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES
CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION HEARING
DUNDEE, FLORIDA

5. REQUEST TO BE HEARD

1. CE -13-00041 Michel C Simmons/Marcus C Simmons 117 Polk Avenue

Michael Simmons requested that the lien for the property at 117 Polk Ave. be reduced as he is not able to pay the amount due. He no longer lives at the residence and wants to sell it. He stated he was unaware that the fine and lien had not been previously taken care of.

Code Compliance Office Josh Larsen testified that the lien with all fines and fees is presently at \$720,750.00. He presented a letter from Town Manager, **Tandra Davis** requesting the Special Magistrate to reduce the fine to its original debt of \$2,337.97. Officer Larsen testified regarding the details of the case.

Results:

Special Magistrate Mawhinney reduced the fine to \$148.03 and administrative costs of \$89.97 and \$12.00 for a total due of \$250.00 as long as it is paid within 30 days.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Tandra S. Davis** is listed below.]

<https://test.fccma.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Awards-and-Scholarships-Committee-Members.pdf>

FCCMA

New Members:

- **Tandra Davis**, Town Manager, Dundee, tdavis@townofdundee.com

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Tandra S. Davis** is listed below.]

https://qregcustomers.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/account13274160/14181761_1.pdf

Warner University Commencement

April 24, 2021

Candidates for

Master of Business Administration Degrees

Tandra Sherraye Davis*..... Baccalaureate Strayer University

*with Distinction (4.0) GPA)

Honor Society Members

Tandra Davis

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: To view the report in its entirety, please follow the link below.]

<https://trellis.law/case/04ed37209/state-california-et-al-vs-tandra-s-davis>
April 26, 2021

Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

The Town of Dundee, FL

For the year ended September 2020

Prepared by:

Finance Department of the Town of Dundee

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

April 26, 2021

To the Honorable Mayor, Members of the Town Commission and
Citizens of the Town of Dundee, Florida

We are pleased to present the Town of Dundee Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. This report addresses the Town's finances for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2020. The organization, form, and contents of this report, plus the accompanying financial statements and statistical tables, were prepared in accordance with the requirements of Governmental Accounting Standards Board, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, and the Governmental Finance Officers Association. In addition to meeting legal the requirements, this report also reflects the Town's commitment to full financial disclosure. We encourage you to thoroughly read the report and the important items it addresses.

This report has been prepared by the Finance Department of the Town of Dundee, which assumes full responsibility for the completeness and accuracy of the information contained herein. To provide a reasonable basis for making these assertions, management applied reasonable procedures and reviewed current year operations. Furthermore, the Town compiled sufficient reliable information for the preparation of the Town's financial statements in conformity with Accounting Principles Generally Accepted in the United States of America (U.S. GAAP). Because the cost of internal controls should not outweigh its benefits, the Town of Dundee's framework of internal controls have been designed to provide reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance that the financial statements will be free from material misstatements. As part of management, we assert that, to the best of our knowledge and belief, the financial report is complete and reliable in all material respects.

State law requires that a complete set of financial statements reporting the Town of Dundee's financial position and results of activities be published within nine months of the fiscal year end. The Town contracted with a licensed certified public accountant, Brynjulfson, CPA, P.A., to conduct the audit. The goal of the independent audit was to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements of the Town for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2020, were free of any material misstatements. The independent auditor concluded there was reasonable basis for rendering an unmodified opinion that the Town of Dundee's financial statements were fairly presented and in conformity with U.S. GAAP. The report of the independent certified public accountant is presented as the first component in the financial section of the report.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

U.S. GAAP requires management provide a narrative introduction, overview, and analysis to accompany the basic financial statements in the form of Management's Discussion and Analysis (MD & A). This letter of transmittal is designed to complement the MD& A and should be read in conjunction with it. The Town of Dundee's MD & A can be found following the report of the independent certified public accountant.

Town Organization

The Town of Dundee, Florida is a municipal corporation of the State, incorporated on December 16, 1924. Located in East Polk County, the 2019 population of Dundee was estimated to be near 5,044. Encompassing approximately 12 miles, the Town has been empowered to levy a property tax on real estate and personal property located within its boundaries. It has also been granted authority by State Statute to extend its corporate limits by annexation, which occurs periodically when deemed appropriate by the Town Commission.

The Town of Dundee operates under a Commission-Manager form of government. The Town Commission is the legislative body for the Town of Dundee. The Commission and is made up of five residents elected by the Town voters, which are responsible for enacting ordinances, budget adoption, appointing committee members, and hiring the Town Manager, Attorney, and Auditor. The Town Manager, who serves as Chief Executive Officer, is responsible for carrying out the policies and ordinances enacted by the Commission, as well as overseeing the daily operations of the Town. Furthermore, the manager is tasked with hiring the department heads of the various town departments.

The Town of Dundee is a full-service town, striving to provide exceptional customer service and quality of life for the community. Our community is a dynamic and attractive municipality characterized by a combination of residential and commercial developments. Services of the town include fire/rescue protection, water and wastewater service, roads and street maintenance, recreational and cultural activities, and general administrative services. Citizens enjoy the personalization of services provided by the town employees.

Local Economy

The current economic conditions, environment, and local indicators show an upswing in property values within the Town of Dundee. The housing market affects revenues greatly due to the tax base being mainly residential. Permit activity continues to grow, and new houses are being built throughout the Town.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Long Term Financial Planning

Long term financial planning requires the town to prepare a five-year capital improvement plan that identifies both capital improvements and related revenue sources. Capital requirements of enterprise operations are financed from capital reserves and from user charges for services. Additionally, capital requirements of the general fund operations are financed from the general fund revenues or reserve funds. Areas of new construction or capital costs associated with growth are funded with impact fees.

Currently, the unassigned fund balance in the General fund is \$1,362,614. The Town Commission and Town Manager continue to work on the needs of the community, while at the same time meeting the needs in a cost-effective and efficient manner. The following projects are planned for the next year and beyond:

- Road widening project with FDOT, relocating water/sewer lines
- Clarifier for the Wastewater Department
- Purchase of Vacuum Trailer Unit
- Purchase of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)
- Purchase of 72" Zero Turn Mowers and Utility Tractor
- Capital Road Paving Project – 20 different roads throughout town
- Replacement of Water Main Line at Lake Marie Blvd.
- Installing a Security Fence around Barn located on Race Road
- Upgrade of Town's Water Treatment Plant

Major Initiatives

During the fiscal year 2020, the Town of Dundee achieved many significant accomplishments in furtherance of the goals and objectives established by the Commission, while securing the Town's infrastructure:

- ADA Compliant Docks
- Purchased a New Building Department Sports Utility Vehicle
- Paved Race Road
- Received Donation of Dundee Chambers of Commerce

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Awards and Acknowledgements

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the Town of Dundee, Florida for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year end of September 30, 2019. This was the second year the Town received this prestigious award. In order to be awarded a Certificate of Achievement, a governmental unit must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized financial report which satisfies both generally accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements.

A Certificate of Achievement is only valid for one year. We believe the current financial report continues to meet the requirements and are submitting it to the GFOA to determine its eligibility for another certificate.

The in-house preparation of this report would not have been possible without the efficient and dedicated services of the entire staff of the Finance Department. Other Town departments, although not extensively involved in year-end audit activities, contributed significantly by ensuring the accuracy and integrity of accounting information compiled throughout the year. Without their diligence, the work of the Finance Department would have been considerably more difficult.

Appreciation must also be expressed to the City's auditors, Mike Brynjulfson and Jordan Ortiz of Brynjulfson, CPA, P.A. whose suggestions and attention to detail enhanced the quality of this report.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tandra S. Davis, MBA
Town Manager/Finance Director

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

<https://townofdundee.com/wp-content/uploads/Town-Commission-Agenda-01.12.2021-PART-1.pdf>
January 12, 2021

**Town of Dundee Florida
Town Commission Meeting**

Commissioner Quarles asked Interim Town Manager Tandra Davis if she was interested in the Town Manager position.

Interim Town Manager Davis responded that the Position Ad that was placed required residency within the Town limits and she lives 6 -7 miles outside of the Town limits and is not able to relocate at this time.

Commissioner Quarles and Harper stated that the Town Charter does not require the Town Manager to have residency in the Town.

Commissioner Glenn and Commissioner Quarles emphasized that she only lives 6 miles from the Town limits and that has not affected her work performance over the past 6 months.

Commissioner Harper and Commissioner Quarles asked if Ms. Davis is interested in the position.

Mayor Pennant asked why Commissioner Quarles hadn't asked this question 6 months ago.

Commissioner Quarles stated that he had asked but at that time Ms. Davis was still very new. After observing what Interim Town Manager Davis is capable of and her many successes over the last 6 months, he believed she should be seriously considered for the position.

Interim Town Manager stated that although at the beginning of the Interim term everything was very new, a few months into the position, she found herself invested in the Town and desiring to step into the permanent position, however, in light of the residency requirement, she did not think her application would qualify for consideration.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE TOWN MANAGER SEARCH COMMITTEE AND APPOINT THE INTERIM TOWN MANAGER AS TOWN MANAGER AND ENTER INTO CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS made by Commissioner Quarles. Second by Commissioner Harper. Motion passed 4 – 1.

Commissioner Glenn clarified that this motion will immediately suspend the Town Manager Search Committee and Candidate Interviews.

Assistant Attorney Claytor replied that if the motion is approved by the Town Commission, the Town Attorney's Office would assist with the contract negotiations between the Town and Interim Town Manager to become the Town Manager. Therefore, the Town Manager Search Committee and Candidate Interviews would be immediately suspended.

AYES: Glenn, Quarles, Harper, Pennant

NAYS: Goddard

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Tandra S. Davis** is listed below.]

<https://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/UF/00/02/83/02/00746/04-25-2019.pdf>
April 25, 2019

The Fort Meade Times
Issue 6

DAVIS 1ST QUARTER EMPLOYEE

Finance Assistant **Tandra Davis** was recognized at the April 9 Fort Meade City Commission Meeting. Financial Officer Breana Smith presented **Davis** the First Quarter Employee of 2019 award

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.ptindirectory.com/tax-preparers/florida/lakeland-fl/681612/helping-hands-tax-services/tandra-s-davis>

PTINdirectory

The National Directory of Registered Tax Return Preparers & Professionals
2012 - 2015

Tandra S. Davis - Lakeland FL Tax Preparer

For tax preparation in Lakeland FL, you can count on **Tandra S. Davis** at Helping Hands Tax Services. **Tandra S. Davis** assists taxpayers and small businesses with taxes in Lakeland FL and the surrounding communities. Whether you are an individual or a local business in or around Lakeland FL, **Tandra S. Davis** has years of valuable experience as an IRS registered tax preparer. Contact **Tandra S. Davis**, tax filing specialist in Lakeland FL, for help with your taxes.

Looking to find the best rated tax preparer in Lakeland FL?

Tandra S. Davis is a local tax preparer at Helping Hands Tax Services located in Lakeland FL. **Tandra S. Davis** and other tax preparers located in Lakeland FL will help you with tax preparation, tax planning, bookkeeping, estate and trust taxes, and so much more.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Tandra S. Davis
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Tandra S. Davis** is listed below.]

<https://www.countingworks.com/professionals-by-city/florida/lake-wales/c-level-professionals>
2012-2015

Connect with the top 5 reviewed C-Level Tax Experts in Lake Wales.

Tandra Davis
HELPING HANDS TAXES AND MARKETING SERVICES
Lake Wales, FL

Research Compiled by: Winona Saunders
Colin Baenziger & Associates



Section 7

Michael “Mike” G. Mahaney

*Fernandina Beach City Manager
Candidate Report*

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BACKGROUND CHECKS	15
CB&A REFERENCE NOTES	21
INTERNET SEARCH	37

Cover Letter and Resume

Section 7

Michael G. Mahaney
mgmahaney@gmail.com
1215 Trisail Lane
North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582
843-503-9646

June 26, 2024

RE: Fernandina Beach City Manager Position

To whom it may concern:

Attached please find my resume for Fernandina Beach's City Manager position. In reading your brochure I observed that I have constructed or renovated many of Fernandina's priorities just across the river in St. Marys Georgia. A visit to St. Marys will reveal plaques on the waterfront park, the family aquatic center, the public works facility, the police station, and City Hall with my name as City Manager. I am also experienced with managing airports, cemeteries, etc. all which exist in St. Marys. During the last fourteen years in North Myrtle Beach, I have dredged canals, renourished the beach, moved overhead electric lines underground, replaced bathrooms, built beach walkovers, constructed parking lots, and much more.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely Yours,

Mike Mahaney

MICHAEL G. MAHANEY, P.E.

mgmahaney1@gmail.com

1215 Trisail Lane, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582 843-503-9646

SUMMARY:

Accomplished Senior City Manager with years of experience overseeing and enhancing operations in vibrant municipalities. Proven leadership in driving sustainable growth, fostering community engagement, and optimizing municipal services to meet the unique needs of coastal residents and tourists alike. Expertise in budget management, infrastructure development, and regulatory compliance, resulting in improved quality of life and economic vitality. Adept at building consensus among stakeholders, leveraging strong communication skills to navigate complex political landscapes and delivering impactful civic projects. Ready to leverage extensive experience to drive forward the strategic vision of a dynamic beach town community.

EDUCATION:

B.S. Civil Engineering, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

M.B.A. Master of Business Administration, James Madison University

REGISTRATION:

Commonwealth of Virginia Professional Engineer (P.E.) #11494

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

2010- Present City Manager - City of North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

\$208,000,000 budget, 20,000 permanent population, 20,000,000 visitors a year. 8,000 dwelling units occupied year-round and 20,000 rental units. More than 8,000 units currently under construction.

- Oversee 620 employees that include Police, Fire, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development, Administrative Divisions and 100 lifeguards supervised by 4 beach patrol officers guarding 9 miles of shoreline.
- Active experience in:
 - Beach renourishment, cost of last project about \$11,000,000
 - Canal and channel dredging, the most recent of which cost about \$6,000,000.
 - King Tide issues and hurricane evacuation, re-entry, and recovery.
- Managing multi-year construction projects from \$5,000,000 to \$40,000,000 including \$37,000,000 expansion of the Sports Complex consisting of 96 acres now underway.
- Operating rental of umbrellas, chairs, and Italian Ice sales generating over \$4,000,000 per year.
- Advancing \$40,000,000 Ocean Outfall Project which removes stormwater from swim zone by laying 84-inch diameter pipe which ends 1,200 feet from shore.
- Overseeing dispatch, police and fire operations including 36,000 calls for service into dispatch in 2023.

Section 7

- Operating Citywide camera and LPR (License Plate Reader) initiative. \$1,500,000 this year including software, hardware, and security building. Approximately another \$3,500,000 anticipated through completion of project.
- Achieved Development Agreement Enhancement Fees up to \$8,000 per single-family dwelling depending on area of the City to cover the capital cost for additional fire stations, police substations, additional fire trucks, police cars, garbage trucks, etc.
- Developed large regional shopping center consisting of about 60 stores anchored by Publix, Hobby Lobby, Dick's Sporting Goods, Kohl's, Burlington Coat Factory, etc.
- Built Sports Complex of 260 acres costing \$22,000,000 and generating economic impact of \$26,000,000 per year.
- Obtained Shark Wake Park operated by Greg Norman Jr, with 8% of the proceeds going to the City.
- Established Christmas Light Show which consists of over 3,000,000 lights, over 128,000 visitors yearly and generates about \$1,000,000 in gross revenue.
- Advanced Industrial Park buildings with national companies such as Amazon, Pepsi, UPS are now located in North Myrtle Beach.
- Oversaw numerous underground electric projects, the last one completed about 10 blocks, costing \$15,000,000.
- Spent about \$15,000,000 in the last three years acquiring land, motels, etc., for additional beach parking, with a total of 2,272 beach area parking spaces. Established hourly parking fee for non-residents generating \$1,400,000 per year with full-time residents receiving two parking passes per property.
- Oversaw design and installation of \$350,000 Jumbo-Tron in strategic location displaying about 25 slides in rotation of city events, beach rules, etc.
- Established maintenance dredge of canals and removal of sand bars costing approximately \$5,000,000.
- Developed Citizen's Academy to educate residents on City operations.
- Regularly present to numerous civic groups, Association of Realtors, etc.

2007-2010 City Manager - City of Deerfield Beach, Florida

Served a summer population of 80,000, and an in-season population of 250,000 within a five-mile radius. Oversaw \$140,000,000 budget and 900 employees for this full-service city. Streetscape improvements along Hillsboro Boulevard funded by the City's Community Redevelopment Agency monies. This \$6,000,000 project included undergrounding of overhead electrical lines, resurfacing, drainage improvements, landscaping, and new brick sidewalks. Federal beach re-nourishment funds providing restoration of hurricane impacted dune areas and adding sand to the public beach. Over 23,000 tons of sand was transported and placed, and over 9,000 native dune plants such as sea oats were installed to stabilize this sand. \$37,000,000 Federal stimulus funds for highway improvements.

2004-2007 County Administrator - Nassau County, Florida

Administered \$148M budget while supervising 19 different departments and working with five constitutional officers providing a full range of services to 654 square miles and 70,000 permanent

residents. Experienced in dealing with large number of tourists, hotel/motel rooms, and large developments such as Amelia Island Plantation, which has a large number of vacation homes. Obtained \$3.8M (100%) Florida Communities Trust Grant (American Beach Area).

2002-2004 City Manager - City of Kannapolis, North Carolina

Served a population of 50,000 and traffic from five interstate exits. Adjacent to two of the top ten most visited destinations in North Carolina (Concord Mills - 12,000,000 shoppers per year and Lowe's Motor speedway-180,000 fans to major races). Fund raising for the erection of the Dale Earnhardt statue and Plaza, the Sam Bass Art Exhibit, \$12M water plant improvements. \$46M obtained for Kannapolis Parkway.

1990-2002 City Manager - City of St. Marys, Georgia

Ranked Number One Small Town by *Money Magazine

Served a population of 25,000. Site of Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, Cumberland Island National Seashore Park Ferry Departure Point and full-service city including airport, cemetery, and downtown historic district. Major projects completed were the new construction of a waterfront park, family aquatic center, public works facility, fire station, police station, airport, road improvements and renovation of city hall. Experienced in development negotiations with hospitality, retail, residential, golf course, construction, manufacturing industries, and community redevelopment utilizing public and private partnerships.

MICHAEL G. MAHANEY, P.E

Candidate Introduction

Michael Mahaney

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration, James Madison University
Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

2010- Present	City Manager - City of North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
2007-2010	City Manager - City of Deerfield Beach, Florida
2004-2007	County Administrator - Nassau County, Florida
2002-2004	City Manager - City of Kannapolis, North Carolina
1990-2002	City Manager - City of St. Marys, Georgia

BACKGROUND

North Myrtle Beach is located in Horry County on the coast of South Carolina. With its 9 miles of pristine beaches, it offers a vacation destination known for its family-friendly atmosphere with great places to eat and stay. As the busy season may see upwards of 100,000 visitors in a day, it offers unique challenges to balance visitor expectations and residents' quality of life. The full-time population of North Myrtle Beach in 2023 was over 20,000 with 20,000,000 tourists visiting the Grand Strand each year.

The City employs approximately 850 employees and I directly supervise a total of twelve employees consisting of the department heads, a City Clerk, and the Assistant City Manager. There are 450 full-time employees, 200 part-time employees and during the summer there are usually 200 seasonal employees.

The general fund budget is \$62,000,000 and the total budget is close to \$208,000,000.

The three most important issues facing North Myrtle Beach are:

- Staying ahead of the tremendous increase in population. The City's resident population has grown from 14,000 in 2010 to over 20,000 in 2023 (with about 8,500 units in the pipeline). While many of them will not be occupied full time, we soon will have 28,000 residents, thus the permanent population has doubled in 14 years. It is crucial for a city to stay ahead of this major population growth and effectively plan and provide essential infrastructure, services, and resources for its residents.
- Maintaining North Myrtle Beach's high quality of life. This is achieved strategically by efficiently managing resources, implementing strategic urban planning, and fostering community engagement.

Michael Mahaney

- Upgrading or replacing City facilities. I must make sure the City's infrastructure is in place to ensure we meet evolving safety standards, technological advancements, and the changing needs of residents, thus maintaining our functionality and enhancing our overall livability.

I am eager to contribute my expertise in renovating, reconstructing, and constructing infrastructure and buildings, areas in which I have excelled throughout my career. Major projects under my leadership in St. Marys include a waterfront park, aquatic center, public works building, police station, and City Hall. These projects showcase my commitment to enhancing community spaces and functionality. A visit to St. Marys would reveal plaques in my name honoring all of these accomplishments. In North Myrtle Beach, my team and I have successfully managed numerous projects including canal dredging, underground electric line installations, restroom replacements, beach walkover construction, city-wide camera system, and parking lot expansions. Looking forward, I seek a city where I can help to foster growth and prosperity utilizing my experience from other cities.

As a sidenote, my wife and I have always considered South Georgia and North Florida our home. We have had a home on Amelia Island since 2005 and spend most of our vacation time there. Please note that this home is not in the City of Fernandina Beach but if selected as the next City Manager, we would sell our North Myrtle Beach home and buy a home in the City of Fernandina Beach.

In my approach to management, I firmly believe in the principle of treating others the way I would want to be treated. This philosophy forms the foundation of how I interact with my team and colleagues. Respect, empathy, and fairness are central to my leadership style. I strive to create a supportive and inclusive environment where every individual feels valued and heard. By practicing open communication, actively listening to concerns, and acknowledging achievements, I aim to foster a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. Ultimately, I believe that by treating others with kindness and understanding, we can cultivate a positive work environment that encourages growth, creativity, and success for everyone involved.

My staff would describe me as a leader who values autonomy and trust. I am not a micromanager; instead, I empower my team members to take ownership of their tasks and make decisions within their areas of responsibility. I believe in providing guidance and support rather than imposing strict oversight. When challenges arise, I am always ready to offer advice and assistance, leveraging my experience and knowledge to help my team navigate obstacles effectively. I prioritize open communication and encourage my staff to approach me with questions or concerns, fostering a collaborative and transparent work environment. By nurturing a culture of trust and mutual respect, I ensure that each team member feels empowered to contribute their best work and achieve our collective goals.

My elected officials recognize me as a proactive individual who anticipates potential challenges before they arise and consistently works towards enhancing the quality of life for our residents. I

Michael Mahaney

take a forward-thinking approach to governance, identifying areas where improvements can be made and implementing strategic initiatives to address community needs. By staying informed about local issues and engaging with stakeholders, I ensure that my actions are informed by a deep understanding of the concerns and aspirations of our residents. I prioritize collaboration with elected officials and community leaders, fostering partnerships that enable us to achieve shared goals effectively. Through innovative solutions and a commitment to excellence, I strive to create positive change and make meaningful contributions to our community's well-being and development.

My strengths are:

- My close relationships with God and my wife provide me with a strong foundation of support and guidance in both personal and professional endeavors.
- My healthy lifestyle, coupled with good genes (my oldest relative lived to 103), allows me to maintain optimal physical and mental well-being, enhancing my productivity and resilience in all aspects of life.
- As a great public speaker, I excel in conveying ideas with clarity and confidence, engaging and inspiring audiences with compelling narratives and persuasive communication skills.

In terms of weaknesses, I find that insufficient sleep can significantly impact my emotional resilience, occasionally leading to heightened sensitivity or getting my feelings hurt more easily. Recognizing this vulnerability, I prioritize maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and practicing effective sleep hygiene to ensure I am well-rested and able to approach challenges with clarity and composure. Moreover, I actively cultivate strategies to manage stress and maintain emotional equilibrium, understanding the profound influence of sleep quality on my overall well-being and professional performance.

The primary metric I employ to gauge performance centers on the satisfaction of my superiors with both my and my staff's efforts in enhancing and sustaining the quality of life within our city. This encompasses a multifaceted evaluation, encompassing strategic initiatives, community engagement outcomes, and the successful implementation of policies aimed at fostering socio-economic development and environmental stewardship. By closely aligning our actions with the overarching goals and expectations set by city leadership, we strive to not only meet but exceed performance benchmarks, ensuring tangible improvements in residents' well-being and urban vitality. Regular communication and feedback loops with stakeholders further enhance our ability to adapt and innovate, fostering a dynamic approach to municipal governance that prioritizes measurable impact and enduring positive change.

I am sorry, but I am unable to narrow my biggest achievement at the City of NMB in the last 14 years down to just one. I must share my top four.

Michael Mahaney

- My most significant achievement has been the strategic assembly of a dedicated and skilled team, whose collaborative efforts have driven transformative changes in all areas of City government.
- The creation of our Sports Park (generating an economic impact of \$26,000,000 per year, and the current \$37,000,000 expansion of the Sports Park has been a game-changer at the City of NMB as we have expanded our busy season to the spring and fall. We have expanded our programming and enhanced community engagement, fostering a vibrant recreational environment that enriches residents' lives.
- Concurrently, our focus on infrastructure improvements has yielded tangible benefits, from upgrading roads and utilities, to our multiple ocean outfall efforts, to implementing sustainable development projects that bolster our city's resilience and livability.
- Additionally, our commitment to enhancing city facilities has resulted in modernized public spaces, efficient municipal services, and improved accessibility, ensuring that North Myrtle remains a desirable place to live, work, and visit for years to come.

The most impactful setback in my career stemmed from early on in my career where I had an inherent tendency to place too much trust in others without sufficient verification or cautionary measures. This experience taught me invaluable lessons in discernment and the importance of balancing trust with prudence in professional relationships.

Throughout my tenure in City and County government, I have been responsible for approving the termination of numerous employees. This decision typically follows recommendations from the chain of command, and while I am not directly involved in the termination process itself, I understand its profound impact on individuals' livelihoods. Each instance weighs heavily on me, as I approach these decisions with utmost gravity and empathy, fully cognizant of the personal and professional repercussions for those involved.

The forthcoming City Manager of Fernandina Beach will encounter multifaceted challenges, notably navigating the complexities posed by an educated and diverse population. Effectively addressing the diverse needs and expectations of this demographic requires adept negotiation skills and a keen ability to facilitate consensus, ensuring that decisions are reached harmoniously. Achieving a constructive "yes" across the spectrum of issues confronting Fernandina Beach demands a strategic approach that fosters inclusivity, transparency, and responsiveness to community concerns. By fostering open dialogue, leveraging community input, and aligning policy initiatives with the city's long-term vision, the City Manager can cultivate an environment where collective aspirations are met through informed and equitable decision-making processes.

During the initial six months, I will focus on building relationships with Council members, Department Heads, employees, and the community, while gaining a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted issues at hand. This period will be dedicated to listening, learning, and familiarizing myself with the perspectives and concerns of stakeholders involved.

Michael Mahaney

By immersing myself in these interactions and acquiring in-depth knowledge, I aim to lay a solid foundation for informed decision-making and effective leadership moving forward.

I work very effectively with the media primarily through our Public Information Officer, as my schedule does not often allow for multiple television and newspaper interviews. Our approach includes the strategic use of press releases, Constant Contact mailouts, podcasts, and other channels to disseminate information efficiently and reach diverse audiences. This media engagement strategy is coordinated by the management team, ensuring that critical issues are communicated with clarity and alignment with organizational goals, and I provide direct approval for significant matters.

There is nothing in my background that would embarrass the City of Fernandina Beach if it became public knowledge. A quick google search of my name will tell you a lot.

The only controversial topic you will find is an untrue and unsubstantiated claim from a local business owner in which I was exonerated.

The City of NMB is dedicated to leveraging social media platforms to engage with our citizens effectively. We actively utilize Facebook, Instagram, our City and departmental websites, customer videos, our Jumbotron and our latest addition - a city podcast.

I do not think any community activists will contact Fernandina Beach with “the dirt” on me.

In my leisure time, I enjoy running, biking, swimming, and spending quality time with my wife. It’s worth noting that I abstain from alcohol and smoking. I also spend a great deal of time at community events, meeting with council members and engaging with members of the community.

Six adjectives or phrases that I would use to describe myself are:

1. **Friendly:** I strive to create positive and welcoming interactions with everyone I meet, fostering open communication and rapport.
2. **Knowledgeable:** I am committed to continuous learning and staying well-informed in my areas of expertise, ensuring that I can provide accurate information and insights.
3. **Proactive:** I take initiative to anticipate needs and address challenges before they arise, contributing to efficient and effective outcomes.
4. **Innovative:** I enjoy exploring new ideas and creative solutions, seeking opportunities to improve processes and generate fresh perspectives.
5. **Ethical:** I adhere to strong moral principles and integrity in all my actions, maintaining trust and reliability in professional and personal relationships.
6. **Realistic:** I approach tasks and goals with a practical mindset, balancing ambition with a clear understanding of constraints and practical considerations.

Michael Mahaney

REASON FOR WANTING TO LEAVE

For many years, South Georgia and Florida have been our cherished homes. Since 2005, Amelia Island has been our haven. Although I fully recognize that pursuing a City Manager's position inevitably alters the dynamics with my current employer - signaling contemplation of departure - I feel that I am moved to apply regardless. As I assess Fernandina Beach's needs, my career journey, and the timing of the opening of this position, it feels like a perfect fit for the decade ahead. Hence, I've eagerly submitted my application.

CURRENT SALARY

My current salary is around \$253,000 yearly with a car allowance of \$1,000 per month.

Section 7

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
MICHAEL "MIKE" GREIG MAHANEY**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County	
Horry County, SC	November 2010 – Traffic / Seatbelt Violation Disposition: December 2010 , fine
Broward County, FL	No Records Found
State	
South Carolina	No Records Found
Florida	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County	
Horry County, SC	No Records Found
Broward County, FL	No Records Found
Federal	
South Carolina	No Records Found
Florida	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

South Carolina	No Records Found
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Credit

Excellent

Personal Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Sex Offender Registry

Not Listed

Education

Confirmed

Employment

Confirmed

Social Media

Nothing of Concern Found

**Background Check Summary for
MICHAEL “MIKE” GREIG MAHANEY**

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
MICHAEL "MIKE" GREIG MAHANEY
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: MICHAEL GREIG MAHANEY

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes No
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes No
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated, driving under the influence, operating a vehicle impaired, or a similar offense?
Yes No
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No
8. Please list all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one.

NONE
9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No
10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

Attested to: _____

Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via PDF DOCUMENT to Lynelle@cb-asso.com or via fax to
(561) 621-5965 **no later than 5:00 PM MST 07/10/2024.**

(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

**Background Check Summary for
MICHAEL “MIKE” GREIG MAHANEY
Personal Disclosure Explanation**

Regarding #2 - Councilwoman Fontana was in the room during the alleged assault. She was deposed by the State Law Enforcement Division. This allegation was political. The accuser, Laura Weaver, was encouraged and coached on what to say. Please note that Councilwoman Fontana is on my reference list and is aware I am applying. Please feel free to contact her. Also please note that Laura Weaver immediately moved to Costa Rica.

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes
Michael G. Mahaney

Harold Worley - Commissioner, Horry County, SC 843-340-5999

Mr. Worley has known Mr. Mahaney since 2010. During Mr. Mahaney's time as City Manager for the City of North Myrtle Beach, Mr. Worley served as a Commissioner for Horry County, in which North Myrtle Beach is located. Mr. Worley is also a Former Council Member for the City, as well as a Former State Representative, so he is familiar with the local and state challenges Mr. Mahaney faces as Manager. Mr. Worley characterizes Mr. Mahaney as the best City Manager he has seen during his 45 years of residence in the City.

Mr. Mahaney has an impressive understanding of development. He manages development well, both residential and commercial. He understands the impact it can have on the community. He is very knowledgeable about public safety and public services. He ensures that newly developed areas have access to the proper infrastructure. He is also very good at interacting with developers and contractors. He has good financial skills. He does a good job of managing the budget.

In North Myrtle Beach, Mr. Mahaney has helped plan and implement several projects, including expanding the City across the waterway and building a new park, fire station, and police department. His efforts have resulted in an expansion of about 4000 units. Mr. Mahaney was also instrumental in creating a Sports Tourism Program.

Mr. Mahaney is a good supervisor. He visits with his employees often and listens to what they have to say. He understands that he must be respectful of his employees while at the same time ensuring they complete their work. He is skilled at personnel management and dealing with human resources issues. Mr. Mahaney also makes good hiring decisions. He is thorough in his research on candidates.

Mr. Mahaney is a problem solver. On one occasion, he helped the City recover from damage after a hurricane. He was instrumental in helping the organization quickly get running again. He is a very hard worker. He often works long hours, waking up at 4:00 am and working into the evening. He works for however long it takes to complete his work. In this way, Mr. Mahaney accomplishes tasks in a timely manner.

Mr. Mahaney is very involved in the community. He regularly attends community meetings representing the City. His presence at meetings and events gives him the opportunity to interact with residents, which he does very well. People in the community like and respect him.

Mr. Worley is not aware of anything in Mr. Mahaney's conduct or background that would concern a citizen or an employer. He knows of no controversy involving Mr. Mahaney, other than having to dismiss employees on occasion.

The Council Members of North Myrtle Beach have identified another individual they wish to appoint as City Manager, and they have asked Mr. Mahaney to step down. A clash of personalities may have also been involved in the decision.

**Reference Notes
Michael G. Mahaney**

Mr. Mahaney has had a positive impact on the City in so many ways. He has provided stable leadership for many years. Mr. Worley is very sorry to see him leave. If Mr. Worley could, he would hire Mr. Mahaney without hesitation. Mr. Worley recommends him for the position of City or County Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Michael Mahaney:

- Hard worker,
- Understands the budget,
- Attentive,
- Prepared for meetings,
- Community oriented,
- Conscious of others' feelings, and
- Humble.

Strengths: Knowledgeable about development, public safety, and infrastructure.

Weaknesses: None identified.

**Kevin Blayton – City Engineer/ Director of Public Works, City of North Myrtle Beach, SC
843-280-5538**

Mr. Blayton has known Mr. Mahaney since 2010, when Mr. Mahaney accepted the position of Manager for the City of North Myrtle Beach. Mr. Blayton has served as the City's Engineer and Director of Public Works since 1998.

Mr. Mahaney's efforts have put the City of North Myrtle Beach in a better position than when he first started. He has guided the City's development and helped it achieve a strong financial position. His 14-year tenure as the City's Manager is comparatively long for a person in his position, especially in a political atmosphere. It testifies of the trust he developed with officials, staff, and residents during his time in the organization.

Mr. Mahaney is a good leader. He rallies his employees around the organization's vision. He trusts Department Heads to run their departments, but he makes himself available to offer advice or provide backup or assistance when needed. He also makes great hiring decisions.

Mr. Mahaney keeps his staff informed. He holds weekly staff meetings with his management team. He explains what is happening in the organization overall, as well as what is happening in individual departments. He is efficient about distributing information and keeps meetings short and to the point. He is responsive to his employees, who can easily reach him whenever the need arises. He has good interpersonal skills. He gets along well with Council Members and city staff. He seeks public input.

Reference Notes Michael G. Mahaney

Mr. Mahaney spends time in the community. He regularly attends meetings representing the organization, and he encourages his employees to attend as well. During public meetings, he often allows staff members to lead and communicate with members of the public, but he is always in attendance and available to present information when needed.

Mr. Mahaney embraces change. When members of his staff propose change, he listens with an open mind. His technical background enables him to understand and promote new technologies. He makes good decisions. He considers the situation carefully and evaluates all the available options. He makes decisions quickly and moves forward with his plans.

Mr. Mahaney solves problems. On one occasion, he led the City through the process of addressing problems related to short-term rental properties owned by companies like Airbnb. The main issues involved excessive trash and noise, and a lack of parking. Mr. Mahaney assembled a team of staff members from departments relating to each of those areas. He led them to come up with recommendations for the Council to address the problems.

Mr. Mahaney is fiscally responsible. While he relies on the Finance Director to manage the City's daily financial needs, he reviews the organization's financial goals. He also oversees the budgeting process. He completes tasks in a timely manner. He does not procrastinate, and he does not allow his staff to procrastinate either. When Mr. Mahaney experiences stressful situations, he can become a little elevated in conversation. However, he does not allow stress to negatively affect his ability to make wise decisions.

Mr. Blayton is not aware of Mr. Mahaney's involvement in any controversy, other than routine disagreements that arise in city politics. Mr. Mahaney makes a special effort to avoid using social media, which could result in negative press if he made a careless comment or became involved in an argument online. He relies upon his staff members to manage the City's social media pages. Mr. Blayton knows of nothing in Mr. Mahaney's background or conduct that would concern any reasonable person.

Words or phrases used to describe Michael Mahaney:

- Efficient,
- Effective,
- Technical in decision making,
- Makes decisions quickly,
- Assesses political environments well, and
- Communicates well with staff.

Strengths: Interacts well with Council and staff, technical background.

Weaknesses: Hesitates to hold extra meetings.

**Reference Notes
Michael G. Mahaney**

Jamie Baker – Assistant Finance Director, City of North Myrtle Beach, SC 843-997-5157

Ms. Baker has known Mr. Mahaney since 2010. When Mr. Mahaney started working as City Manager for North Myrtle Beach, Ms. Baker was serving as Accounting Supervisor for the City. She later took the position of Assistant Finance Director. They work well together. Ms. Baker appreciates Mr. Mahaney for his effective management style.

Mr. Mahaney is a great leader. He rallies his employees around the organization's vision. He supports and guides his employees but does not micromanage them. He trusts their expertise and gives them freedom to work in their own ways. He is most involved at the beginning of a project, when he defines goals, and at the end, when he reviews the plans and follows up with his staff. He genuinely cares about his employees and works to fill their needs. When Ms. Baker's husband passed away, he helped her create a more flexible work schedule so she could continue to work and take care of her family at the same time.

When hiring personnel, Mr. Mahaney identifies professional candidates he can trust to fulfill their responsibilities. When filling positions, he also seeks to promote diversity in the organization. In North Myrtle Beach, he accomplished this in part by mentoring female employees and helping them advance within the organization.

Mr. Mahaney is an agent of change. The City of North Myrtle Beach has experienced a great deal of growth during his time as Manager. He seeks and acts upon opportunities to expand and improve the City. One improvement he helped implement was the development of sports tourism in the community, which increased the number of visitors at times outside of the busy tourist season. He was instrumental in expanding the City's parks and facilities to accommodate sporting events. He promoted the project to the Council and won their support.

During the City's rapid expansion, many problems arose that Mr. Mahaney helped solve. One major problem was low staff retention. He coordinated with staff across several departments to create a plan to help the City be more competitive in the job market. He and his team found ways to offer higher wages and greater benefits.

Mr. Mahaney keeps his employees informed of what is happening in the organization. He explains what they need to do and why it is important. Ms. Baker especially appreciates him for explaining why certain things need to be done. As a member of the Finance Department, she and her staff sometimes feel isolated and do not always know what is going on in other departments and in the community at large.

Mr. Mahaney does a great job of interacting with people in the community. He develops relationships with people from many different backgrounds. He attends community meetings and events and is actively involved in various community groups. Residents of North Myrtle Beach know and respect him. When he encounters a group of people with an adversarial attitude, he does not allow that attitude to dominate and spread.

**Reference Notes
Michael G. Mahaney**

As a City Manager, Mr. Mahaney deals with many demands from the public, his staff, and Council Members. This places a great deal of stress upon him. However, he manages these feelings very well and does not allow them to prevent him from completing tasks in a timely manner. Mr. Mahaney excels at prioritizing tasks and guiding people toward tasks that need to be completed first.

Mr. Mahaney was involved in a controversy in which a female business owner accused him of touching her aggressively during a meeting. After investigation, the State Law Enforcement Division dismissed the charges. Ms. Baker believes the accusation was politically motivated. As a female coworker, she has never felt uncomfortable around Mr. Mahaney. Bullying is not in his nature. Ms. Baker is not aware of anything in his background or conduct that would concern any reasonable person.

Ms. Baker is grateful for the opportunity to work with Mr. Mahaney. She appreciates his confidence in her and the opportunities he offered her to advance. She highly recommends him for the position of City or County Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Michael Mahaney:

- Caring,
- Compassionate,
- Delivers results,
- Gets along with everyone,
- Charismatic, and
- Stands his ground against bullies.

Strengths: Helps employees advance, hires diverse individuals.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Suzanne Pritchard – Assistant Director of Planning & Development, City of North Myrtle Beach, SC 843-455-7699

Ms. Pritchard has known Mr. Mahaney since 2016, when she became the Assistant Director of Planning & Development for North Myrtle Beach. Prior to that, she was a resident of the City and recognized Mr. Mahaney from his attendance at public meetings and events. Mr. Mahaney is a Manager who gets results for citizens and Council Members.

Mr. Mahaney is a good boss. He is affable and easy to work with. Though he has a strong personality, he is aware of it and works to ensure it does not cause disruptions in the workplace. He keeps his staff informed and makes time to discuss his concerns and learn about their concerns.

Reference Notes Michael G. Mahaney

Mr. Mahaney has a great deal of experience dealing with members of the public. He is very responsive and teaches his employees to do the same. He does not ignore anyone and works hard to find resources that will help him address their concerns. He is fiscally responsible. He does not spend money the organization does not have available. He is good at identifying sources of funding for new projects. He works very well under pressure. He thrives on stress, which motivates him to work hard and complete tasks on time.

Mr. Mahaney loves to solve problems. One problem he is currently involved in is both a public and political priority and concerns finding a location for the local Humane Society. Mr. Mahaney has assembled a team of city staff from multiple departments and outside organizations, including staff from the Public Works and Planning Departments, the Humane Society, and Landscape Architect firms. He holds regular meetings to identify and procure a site to accommodate them. The parcel of land the Humane Society prefers sits at the intersection of several other city projects. Therefore, Mr. Mahaney has also involved staff from the Parks and Recreation Department and the Aquatic and Fitness Center. His team is working on strategies to promote shared parking, so the Humane Society, the Aquatic and Fitness Center, and the Public Works Department can all use the same areas. Mr. Mahaney has also brought the City Attorney in to help make a contract for the purchase of the land.

Many controversies arise in local government, especially concerning proposals for development that are unpopular with residents. However, Ms. Pritchard knows of no controversy involving Mr. Mahaney on a personal level. He handles routine controversies with skill. His conduct and background are appropriate for a person in his position.

Mr. Mahaney is an outstanding City Manager. He is effective and productive. He does a great job of representing the interests of both elected officials and the public. Ms. Pritchard recommends him for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Michael Mahaney:

- Energetic,
- Active,
- Involved,
- Concerned,
- Affable, and
- Problem solver.

Strengths: Easy to work with, good at delegating and prioritizing.

Weaknesses: Not the best at long-term planning.

Reference Notes Michael G. Mahaney

Nikki Fontana – Council Member, City of North Myrtle Beach, SC 843-267-9152

Ms. Fontana has known Mr. Mahaney since 2013, when she became a Council Member in North Myrtle Beach, where Mr. Mahaney serves as City Manager. He does his job with impeccable detail. She appreciates him for guiding her as a new Council Member. Ms. Fontana has changed her thinking as a result of the way he presents issues and looks at the big picture.

Mr. Mahaney has made the North Myrtle Beach a leader among local government organizations. When he and other representatives attend municipal association conferences, they receive compliments from other City Managers, Councils, and Mayors. They watch how Mr. Mahaney and his staff handle problems and follow their example. Mr. Mahaney is always glad to offer them suggestions and guidance.

Mr. Mahaney manages staff well. He consistently keeps his employees informed of what is happening in his area of the organization. He gives his opinion on what should happen, but he allows his Department Heads to lead their staff in the way they choose. He is happy to help when asked or to intervene when necessary. He also makes great decisions when hiring personnel.

Mr. Mahaney is innovative. He has vastly improved the way North Myrtle Beach operates. He constantly looks for ways to make the City a better place. Under his management, the City has grown and developed. As witness, the City's budget has expanded from \$65 million in 2013 to over \$200 million in 2024. One specific improvement Mr. Mahaney has made is increasing tourism during the off-season. North Myrtle Beach's economy relies heavily on tourism. However, before Mr. Mahaney's tenure, the City essentially shut down after Labor Day because there were so few tourists during the winter months. When he became City Manager, he was instrumental in proposing and receiving approval for a multi-million-dollar Sports Complex. The facility has soccer, lacrosse, and baseball fields for hosting tournaments, as well as a walking track and an amphitheater for concerts. The Complex has increased the number of visitors throughout the year and is in high demand among local teams. The City is currently in the process of expanding the facility by 99 acres.

Mr. Mahaney spends a great deal of time in the community. He regularly attends community meetings and events. He interacts often with residents and tourists, both individually and in groups. He is aware of what people in the community need and want, which enables him to address concerns before they become a major problem. He deals very well with stress. He is a highly motivated person. During stressful situations, he focuses on the matter at hand and works through problems.

Mr. Mahaney has additional talents that make him an excellent City Manager. He has very good financial skills. He also completes tasks in a timely manner. He is good at navigating in a political environment. He plans ahead. He hopes for the best but prepares for the worst. He especially does a good job of making plans to prevent and mitigate hurricane damage.

Reference Notes
Michael G. Mahaney

Mr. Mahaney was involved in a controversy in which a business owner accused him of assaulting her during a business meeting. Ms. Fontana was present during the incident and described the situation in detail:

Ms. Fontana was acquainted with Laura Weaver, the owner of Glass Bottom Kayak Tours, and her boyfriend and business partner, Tyler Watkins. The couple had always been friendly and supported Ms. Fontana in her political endeavors.

The City had recently encountered difficulties with kayak companies overusing public boat ramps, and the Council established ordinances to manage the problem. Mr. Watkins sent Ms. Fontana an email about another company that appeared to be operating without a business license and in violation of the new ordinances. Ms. Fontana invited Mr. Watkins to come to City Hall to discuss the matter with her and Mr. Mahaney.

Mr. Watkins was not available to meet, so Ms. Weaver came instead. The discussion started amicably. Mr. Mahaney asked Ms. Weaver to look at something on his computer, so they sat next to one another, with Mr. Mahaney seated in between Ms. Fontana and Ms. Weaver. Mr. Mahaney informed Ms. Weaver that because of the political nature of the problem, it would be best to wait until the end of the season to address it. Upon hearing this news, Ms. Weaver became irate and started to raise her voice. Ms. Fontana was very surprised at her sudden negative reaction. It seemed out of character. Mr. Mahaney tapped Ms. Weaver on the leg to get her attention and calm her down. At this point, Ms. Weaver became even more agitated. Mr. Mahaney then offered her candy, which succeeded in calming her, and Ms. Fontana walked her out.

Before Ms. Weaver left, she called Mr. Watkins and angrily described how Mr. Mahaney had “grabbed” her. Mr. Watkins soon after arrived at City Hall, and Ms. Fontana escorted him and Ms. Weaver to a conference room to talk. Ms. Fontana explained the situation and the innocent nature of the touch. She successfully calmed both Ms. Weaver and Mr. Watkins and assured them that they would soon address their business concern. Ms. Weaver and Mr. Watkins left on friendly terms.

Three days later, Ms. Weaver accused Mr. Mahaney of assault. The State Law Enforcement Division investigated the incident and quickly dismissed the charges. Ms. Fontana believes Ms. Weaver and Mr. Watkins were influenced by a former Council Member, Terry White, who had a grudge against the City and Mr. Mahaney. Mr. White lived close to Ms. Weaver and Mr. Watkins, and he likely coached them on what to do and say when making the accusations. After the charges were dismissed, Ms. Weaver and Mr. Watkins sold their business and moved to Costa Rica.

Ms. Fontana was shocked and disheartened by the experience. Mr. Mahaney did not do anything inappropriate. During the investigation, many members of the public expressed their support for him. Ms. Fontana is not aware of anything in Mr. Mahaney’s background or conduct that would concern any reasonable person.

Reference Notes
Michael G. Mahaney

Mr. Mahaney is one of the best City Managers North Myrtle Beach has had. He will be an asset to any organization. Ms. Fontana highly recommends him for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Michael Mahaney:

- Detail oriented,
- Motivated,
- Intelligent,
- Creative,
- Leader,
- Go-getter, and
- Not afraid to handle a problem.

Strengths: Problem solving.

Weaknesses: He raises his voice at times when he tries to be assertive; it is intimidating to some.

**Tammy O’Berry – Director of Human Resources, City of North Myrtle Beach, SC
843-280-5519**

Ms. O’Berry has known Mr. Mahaney since 2019. Ms. O’Berry reports directly to Mr. Mahaney in her position as Director of Human Resources. He is an amazing Manager. Despite having to give up 18 years’ worth of accumulated state retirement benefits from her previous job, Ms. O’Berry sought a position in North Myrtle Beach to have the opportunity to work with Mr. Mahaney. She appreciates the way he runs the City as a business, which she had never seen before. Under Mr. Mahaney’s management, the City works the way it was designed to work.

Mr. Mahaney leads his staff with skill. He motivates his employees to serve the citizens of North Myrtle Beach and make the City a great place to live, work, and visit. He unites them in completing projects and tasks that will help them realize the organization’s vision. He also encourages them to focus on managing the City’s growth in a responsible way. Mr. Mahaney also makes wise hiring decisions. He hires competent individuals who he can trust to do their jobs.

Mr. Mahaney does a good job of keeping his employees informed of what is happening in the organization. He holds weekly staff meetings, in which he invites each department to share their projects, events, concerns, and successes. These meetings help employees learn about the inner workings of local government in areas they would not normally interact with.

Reference Notes

Michael G. Mahaney

Mr. Mahaney solves problems. Whenever the City must make a big decision about a personnel issue, he finds a way to promote a consensus among Human Resources staff, Legal Department staff, and Department Heads. He helps them work together as a team to make a decision.

Mr. Mahaney is innovative. He constantly identifies ways for North Myrtle Beach to attract more tourists to support the local economy. He led the effort to build and later expand a sports park. The facility has attracted visitors throughout the spring and fall. He also proposed a Christmas lights show to attract tourists during the winter. His efforts have transformed the City from a summer destination to a year-round destination.

Mr. Mahaney is involved in the community. He attends community meetings and many of the City's big events. He is constantly on the phone or out and about, interacting with residents and business owners. He does a good job of gaining public support for City projects. One project that required a great deal of community support was a parking program, which he successfully implemented.

Mr. Mahaney has excellent financial abilities. Ms. O'Berry has never before worked in an organization in which the budget is run so carefully. She always has the resources to purchase what her department needs.

Mr. Mahaney manages stress by keeping himself fit and healthy. He runs, swims, and rides his bicycle. During tense situations, he does not outwardly display negative emotions. He performs well under pressure, consistently completing tasks in a timely manner.

Ms. O'Berry is not aware of anything in Mr. Mahaney's conduct or background that would concern a citizen or an employer. However, he was involved in a controversy in which a young woman accused him of touching her inappropriately during a meeting. Mr. Mahaney touched her leg in an attempt to comfort her when she became upset. Investigators dismissed the charges because there was no evidence of inappropriate activity. Ms. O'Berry characterizes the accusation as a political stunt. Mr. Mahaney handled the controversy well and maintained his composure and professionalism throughout the investigation.

Mr. Mahaney is an amazing City Manager. Ms. O'Berry will miss him if he leaves, but she supports him in his efforts to advance in his career. She recommends him for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Michael Mahaney:

- His nickname is Rabbit because he is always on the go,
- Decisive,
- Business oriented,
- Friendly,
- Caring, and
- Ethical.

Reference Notes
Michael G. Mahaney

Strengths: Hires competent employees, works well with Council and unites them.

Weaknesses: Overachiever, has so many ideas that others cannot keep up with them.

Jerry Brandon – Former Mayor, City of St. Marys, GA 406-426-0060

Mr. Brandon has known Mr. Mahaney since 1990. Mr. Mahaney became Manager for the City of St. Marys in the same year Mr. Brandon became Mayor. They worked together in St. Marys until Mr. Mahaney took a new position in Kannapolis in 2001. He is a capable and productive Manager who does not take short cuts.

Mr. Mahaney is very knowledgeable about running a city. He puts his knowledge and experience to good use. He takes his responsibility to serve the people very seriously. Before he even applied for the position in St. Marys, he attended a Council meeting to help him understand the City's strengths and challenges. This so impressed Council Members that it factored heavily into their decision to hire him.

Mr. Mahaney is strict about following rules, policies, and procedures. On one occasion, Council Members noticed that a tree was in danger of falling on Mr. Mahaney's garage. Mr. Mahaney objected to allowing them to do any work on his property, but he was out of town, so the Council and Public Works Director overrode him and did it anyway.

Mr. Mahaney is a good leader. He trusts his Department Heads to manage their own staff. He will gladly assist if asked, but he does not interfere with or take over their responsibilities. He rallies his staff around the organization's vision. He keeps his colleagues informed. He visits them in their offices or calls them to gather their input on the decisions he made.

Mr. Mahaney is experienced with managing personnel. During his time in St. Marys, he hired several employees. He is also familiar with the process of dismissing employees.

Mr. Mahaney solves problems. In St. Marys, several of the local shops offered free sodas to police officers. One officer abused the privilege by helping himself to multiple 2-liter bottles of soda. Mr. Mahaney put a regulation in place limiting free drinks to fountain drinks. The officer was offended and wrote a ticket that was mostly motivated by revenge. The perceived infraction was minor, and the officer exaggerated the situation. Mr. Mahaney visited the Police Department and asked for the ticket to be withdrawn. When the Police Chief refused, Mr. Mahaney declared he would testify on behalf of the driver. The Police Chief soon came to understand Mr. Mahaney's point of view and withdrew the ticket.

Mr. Mahaney has many innovative ideas. He consistently looks for ways to improve the City. In St. Marys, there was a paper mill that had closed. The owners were trying to sell the property. Mr. Mahaney realized that the City owned several streets that were not being used. He suggested trading those city streets in exchange for the paper mill property so the City could install a boat

Reference Notes

Michael G. Mahaney

ramp there. Mr. Mahaney negotiated the terms of the deal and worked with the Department of Natural Resources to install the ramp. Mr. Mahaney was also instrumental in building a riverside park on the property by the ramp. He helped form a committee to design it. He found a way to purchase more land for the park for a much lower price than they expected to have to spend. However, the City did not have enough funds to develop the property after they purchased it. Mr. Mahaney convinced the Governor to give them the money out of his discretionary funds. He agreed, but then Mr. Mahaney came up with another idea. The late owner of the paper mill, Howard Gilman, had created White Oak Foundation, a nonprofit organization to manage his assets and charitable donations after his death. Mr. Mahaney and his colleagues approached the Foundation, offering to name the park after Mr. Gilman in exchange for the needed funds. They agreed, provided they could pay in phases. Mr. Mahaney arranged to take out a bank loan so they could pay the contractors and repay the loan in phases as the money from the Foundation became available. The City used the \$900,000 they obtained from the Governor to build a profitable water park.

Mr. Mahaney has a good understanding of municipal finance. He is knowledgeable enough to assist with financial matters when needed. In St. Mary's he recognized that an employee was charging the City for personal expenses and put a stop to it.

Mr. Mahaney is a big proponent of following a chain of command. He does not tolerate the Council giving orders to his employees or being overly involved in the day-to-day operations of the City.

Mr. Mahaney is confident and assertive. He is not intimidated by employees who resist his authority. He is not intimidated by elected officials. He is firm with residents who pressure him to bend the rules. He is firm with developers about following recommendations for prevention of hurricane damage.

Mr. Mahaney manages stress by keeping his body healthy. He refrains from drinking alcohol. He runs five to six days per week and even enters races. He also deals with tension by discussing his frustrations with trusted colleagues. He does not allow stress to affect his performance or prevent him from completing tasks in a timely manner.

Mr. Mahaney was accused of allowing City crews and Public Works Department personnel to find and fix a sewer leak on his private property. However, he did not allow them to do anything on his property, and he was able to prove it.

Mr. Mahaney left St. Marys after he and the Council Members decided to annex a portion of land. The annexation was legal and encouraged by the State, but the residents of the land were opposed to the measure. Once the land was annexed, its residents expressed their displeasure by voting the Council Members out of office. The new Council Members pressured Mr. Mahaney to resign.

Reference Notes
Michael G. Mahaney

Mr. Brandon is not aware of anything in Mr. Mahaney's background or conduct that would prevent him from honorable service in local government. Mr. Mahaney is a great City Manager. He does great work for the organizations he serves. Mr. Brandon highly recommends him.

Words or phrases used to describe Michael Mahaney:

- Punctual,
- Competent,
- Capable,
- Friendly,
- Comprehensive, and
- Works well with elected officials.

Strengths: Strictly follows rules.

Weaknesses: Some people complain about him because he is brusque and straightforward. Could be a bit friendlier with people who disagree with him.

Fred Coyne – Council Member, City of North Myrtle Beach, SC 843-458-1698

Mr. Coyne has known Mr. Mahaney since 2011. Mr. Coyne served as a Council Member during Mr. Mahaney's time as City Manager for the City of North Myrtle Beach. Mr. Coyne characterizes Mr. Mahaney's job performance as good.

Mr. Mahaney is innovative and an agent of change. In North Myrtle Beach, he thought of ideas to make the City a winter destination, in addition to being a popular summer destination. One of these ideas was a Christmas lights show. The show earned the City money through paid parking areas. On another occasion, he worked to make the City's Sports Complex into a profit center instead of a financial drain. He set up an enterprise fund to help pay for it.

Mr. Mahaney has a great deal of experience with interacting with members of the public. He has had many successful meetings with both individuals and groups that have helped the organization move forward with its plans. However, to some people, Mr. Mahaney has an overly strong personality. He is very forward and direct.

Mr. Mahaney is active in the community. He attends Council meetings, as well as meetings for the Chamber of Commerce. He also attends meetings and events for other local organizations, but he puts the City first in his priorities.

Mr. Mahaney is a problem solver. When North Myrtle Beach experienced a surge in the number of short-term rental properties, it negatively affected permanent residents. Short term renters contributed to an increase in traffic, noise, and trash. Mr. Mahaney collected feedback from

Reference Notes Michael G. Mahaney

permanent residents about the problem. He then coordinated with staff members in multiple departments to address these issues. He involved police and fire personnel, code enforcement officers, and staff from the Planning, Information Technology, and Finance Departments. His team introduced ordinances mandating quiet hours, regulating parking, and increasing the number of trash pickup days in certain areas.

Mr. Mahaney has many other qualities that help him succeed as a City Manager. He is a good leader who rallies his employees around the organization's vision. He makes good hiring decisions. He keeps his colleagues informed of what is happening in his area of government. He has very good financial skills. He thrives under pressure. He does not hesitate to begin projects and completes them in a timely manner.

Mr. Mahaney's conduct and background are appropriate for a person in his position. However, on one occasion, he was involved in a controversy involving a business owner. Laura Weaver, the owner of a glass-bottom kayak tour company, accused Mr. Mahaney of assault and battery. The charges were soon after dismissed, and Mr. Coyne is one of the many who feel the charges were unfounded. Mr. Mahaney navigated the situation exceptionally well.

Mr. Mahaney is a great City Manager. Mr. Coyne highly recommends him.

Words or phrases used to describe Michael Mahaney:

- Energetic,
- Enthusiastic,
- Proactive,
- Active,
- Leader, and
- Perseverant.

Strengths: Leadership, decisiveness, proactive.

Weaknesses: Overly strong personality at times.

Prepared by: Claire Argyle
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)
March 6, 2024

This city's parking rates just became the highest on the Grand Strand

Author/Byline: Nicole Ziege

Parking in North Myrtle Beach just became more expensive. City Council on March 4 approved increasing the fees at city-owned parking lots and public rights of way from \$3 to \$4 per hour, the highest rate of any Grand Strand beach. The lone exception in the city is the Seaview Lot, which remains \$2 per hour. City Councilman Hank Thomas said he received complaints about the increase but he still supports the plan, calling it vital for the city's growth. "Our taxpayers and what revenue we can generate from the fees is what allows us to acquire these properties for public parking," Thomas said. "We don't really want to raise the fees, but it's necessary ... with the growth of the city and the county." City Councilwoman Nikki Fontana agreed, arguing the fee increase will help pay for renovations to public accommodations by those city-owned lots.

Mayor Marilyn Hatley has said the increase is meant to offset operational costs and still keep North Myrtle competitive with other local municipalities. She said the city spends millions on property for parking spaces. "It's something that we desperately need and we have to do it," she said Feb. 19, before the council took its first vote on the hike. "But we have to plan for the future." Though city leaders approved the increase, they did not discuss or approve a maximum daily rate for parking in city-owned lots. In February, the council discussed a maximum daily parking rate, or a kind of parking pass, for visitors. Hatley even recommended a possible \$25-35 maximum. But that proposal didn't gain traction, and City Manager **Mike Mahaney** said city leaders don't have any immediate plans for a daily parking maximum. "I can't tell you what's going to happen in the future, but it's not going to happen this year," **Mahaney** said. Though the parking fees have increased to \$4 per hour, city residents can still park for free in city lots, and Horry County residents can purchase a \$200 annual parking pass to park in city lots.

Other area beaches have also raised parking rates in recent years. In 2022, Myrtle Beach increased parking fees to \$3 per hour along the Oceanfront Beach Access (or \$15 maximum daily); \$2 per hour from 6th Avenue North to 16th Avenue North with no maximum daily rate; and \$2 per hour from 29th Avenue South to 31st Avenue North (or \$10 maximum daily), according to city documents. Myrtle Beach residents can park for free in city lots by using resident parking decals, and the city sells nonresident annual parking passes for \$100. Weekly on-street parking passes in Myrtle Beach cost \$50. Meanwhile, Horry County charges \$1.25 an hour for parking in most of its lots during the summer season, though the county's Garden City and Nash Street beach accesses provide free, year-round parking. Surfside Beach charges \$3 per hour or \$15 per day for 10 of its lots and \$2 per hour or \$10 per day for all others except the pier lot, which is \$4 per hour with no maximum daily rate.

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun News, The (Myrtle Beach, SC)
August 10, 2023

Year-old monopoly lawsuit against North Myrtle Beach likely to drag into 2024

Author/Byline: Adam Benson

For more than a year, a family-run business and North Myrtle Beach have battled in federal court over a 1990 law restricting private commerce on the city's shores. Even as the docket grows in *Cherry Grove Beach Gear LLC v. City of North Myrtle Beach*, a possible trial remains months away, with U.S. Circuit Court Judge R. Bryan Harwell last month setting a March 11 deadline for jury selection. Here's what to know about a case that could change the future of commerce in a city that draws millions from tourism activity every year. Cherry Grove Beach Gear accused the city of running a monopoly. Derek Calhoun and his wife, Jackie, launched their beach gear delivery business in 2019, allowing customers to rent chairs, umbrellas, surfboards and other goods that would be installed for them directly on the sand. But a long-standing city ordinance prevented on-site setups by private firms unless they were franchised, with fines of up to \$500 a day. The Calhouns twice applied for a franchise tag and sought legal action after being denied both times. Derek Calhoun filed a federal lawsuit accusing North Myrtle Beach of violating state and federal antitrust laws, his company's 14th Amendment rights that promise equal protection and defamation. The 20-page motion says city leaders are violating antitrust laws by refusing to consider them for a franchise allowing the installation of rental equipment on public shores. City officials, the suit argues, wrote a "sham" law "designed to restrict competitive business practices and monopolize business in order to maximize profits."

North Myrtle Beach says its policy is about public safety and allowed under state law. Private commerce on the city's beaches has been regulated since 1990, when officials first required vendors to obtain a franchise agreement. Since then, the rules have been adjusted several times, most recently in 2010 when authorized hours, placement and size of shading devices and removal of equipment was written into the law. Businesses can rent or sell gear online or deliver equipment to off-site locations. City-managed rentals are a revenue stream that officials say helps keep taxes down and pay for lifeguards and beach patrols. In the 2022 budget, officials allocated \$2.6 million in expected profits from the umbrella and chair rentals, with an additional \$10,000 from food and drink purchases. Customers can rent umbrellas through the city for \$30 a day each. It costs \$20 for chairs. Weekly rates are between \$80 and \$120, while seasonal prices — Memorial Day through Labor Day — are \$900 for residents and \$1,800 for visitors. City officials point to a 1962 portion of state law allowing municipalities to "grant franchises and make charges for the use of public beaches" as grounds for their policy. The city has franchise agreements with three businesses that offer banana boats and parasailing, but officials have said in the past they won't consider granting one to Cherry Gear as long as the company continues to dismiss the law.

Cherry Grove has racked up more than \$40,000 worth of fines. Between June and post-Labor Day, the company was hit with \$20,500 in total citations for continuing to set up recreation stations on the beach — or 41 days' worth of fines. Despite North Myrtle Beach's hard-line

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

enforcement, Cherry Grove Beach Gear poked fun at city officials as the penalties continued to mount, even setting up a chair and umbrella set for Mayor Marilyn Hatley. Harwell last September ruled the city can continue to slap Cherry Grove Beach Gear with daily fines as the lawsuit progresses. It's not immediately known how much Cherry Grove has incurred in fines since then. Both sides have already won concessions, but not enough for the case to be dropped

Near the end of 2022, Harwell said Cherry Grove Beach Gear can't sue the city over defamation claims without bringing more evidence— one of seven grounds included in the company's July 11 lawsuit. Harwell dismissed the claim "without prejudice," meaning lawyers can try to prove it again. But he tossed "with prejudice" arguments that North Myrtle Beach's policies violated 14th Amendment equal protection laws — permanently removing it from the suit. But he sided with Cherry Grove Beach Gear's ability to sue under other elements of the law, including: Antitrust claims Regulatory taking Violation of state and federal contract clauses

Multiple city police officers could be among those called to the stand at trial. Cherry Grove's witness list includes in the Calhouns and Stephen Dailey, listed in court documents as a company representative who has been ticketed by local police. Accountant Robert Milhous (incorrectly identified as Millhouse in court filings), city finance director Randy Wright, city attorney Chris Noury, every city police officer who's issued the Calhouns a citation and an unidentified state Department of Revenue employee are also expected to be called on

Meanwhile, city manager **Mike Mahaney** will lead the defense's slate of witnesses with other officials including Munro Reed — city's beach patrol manager — and Graham Faris, who's in charge of day-to-day beach operations. Several members of the city's finance department are also listed as potential witnesses.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The State
March 4, 2023

North Myrtle Beach refuses to answer why their top leader wore a body cam to groundbreaking
By Adam Benson

North Myrtle Beach city leaders refuse to say why their top administrator wore a body camera to a midday groundbreaking last week. It is unclear why he could feel unsafe in his own town at the event that included several police officers among the more than 100 who attended. Neither **Mike Mahaney**, Mayor Marilyn Hatley or city spokesman Donald Graham have responded beyond a one-sentence statement sent to The Sun News on Feb. 26 - two days after the event.

Hatley said the one-line response was "self-explanatory," and every other member of the city's council: J.O. Baldwin III, Bubba Collins, Fred Coyne, Nicole Fontana, Trey Skidmore and Hank Thomas, did not immediately reply to emails or phone calls seeking clarity on **Mike Mahaney's** decision. Taylor Smith, an attorney for the S.C. Press Association, said it was unusual for a city leader to wear a body camera at public events and the city would "have to" give reason for why he was wearing it. "It definitely seems to be outside the norm. I have never seen that on behalf of a non-law enforcement official," Smith said. "If there's any kind of record which is ever mentioning the city manager and a body cam then that is something you should definitely be able to find in the statute. They (the city) would have to trot out at least a reason that would give you a strong clue as to why he's wearing it."

The Sun News has requested through the state's Freedom of Information Act all body camera footage captured by **Mahaney** between Jan. 1 and Feb. 24. "We routinely enhance safety protocols according to situational circumstances," Graham said. How could the city manager feel unsafe at a public event in North Myrtle Beach surrounded by many other elected officials and dignitaries from Pepsi and the business community? The answer has not been provided. Graham did not answer several other questions, including how long **Mahaney** has worn the camera, who's paying for it, whether he decided to begin using it, and under what conditions it's activated. Was the camera on Friday? The city will not provide the information to the public.

Mahaney, who's been with the city since 2010, wore the Axon device on his shirt during a Feb. 24 ceremony welcoming Pepsi Bottling Ventures to the city's Palmetto State Industrial Park. "If you do a story, you can say the city manager has no comment," **Mahaney** told The Sun News at the event. Spokespeople for Horry County and Myrtle Beach said they were also unaware of an elected or appointed official using a body worn camera. Hatley said later on Friday the equipment wasn't being required by city leaders, and was unsure why **Mahaney** was using it. "I'm sure it was for some safety measure, but I don't know," she said. "There's no mandate for him to wear one."

The event - which included members of the city and Horry County councils, state Sen. Greg Hembree and several local police officers including Chief Dana Crowell - drew a crowd of more

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

than 100. Nobody other than **Mahaney** and police had visible body cameras. The city manager has had public run-ins before North Myrtle Beach does not live-stream its council meetings, but they are recorded for internal record keeping. The city stopped broadcasting its meetings coming out of COVID protocols.

Mahaney was cleared of criminal charges in November stemming from an alleged confrontation with a business owner that happened earlier in 2022. The S.C. Law Enforcement Division launched an investigation following allegations that **Mahaney** put his hands on Glass Bottom Kayak Tours co-owner Laura Weaver during a City Hall meeting. A SLED special agent reported to 15th Circuit Solicitor Jimmy Richardson that there was "no question" **Mahaney** made contact with Weaver, but the county's top prosecutor said there wasn't enough evidence to pursue charges. In 2015, South Carolina became the first state to mandate its police officers wear body cameras while on the job, but lawmakers inserted language into the provision exempting footage from being released under the state's open records act.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: We asked Mr. **Mahaney** about this incident. Please see below for his response:

“Councilwoman Fontana was in the room. She was deposed by the State Law Enforcement Division. This allegation was political. She was encouraged and coached on what to say. Please note that Councilwoman Fontana is on my reference list. Please feel free to contact her. Also please note that Laura Weaver immediately moved to Costa Rica.”]

https://www.myhorrynews.com/news/crime/north-myrtle-beach-city-manager-mike-mahaney-wont-be-prosecuted-for-assault-allegation/article_b6e08dea-5f83-11ed-b409-5328abf8178e.html
Nov 8, 2022

North Myrtle Beach city manager won't be prosecuted over assault allegation

By Christian Boschult

North Myrtle Beach City Manager **Mike Mahaney** will not face any criminal charges over an assault and battery complaint that was lodged against him by a city business owner earlier this year. The State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) investigated the May 10 incident and sent its findings to 15th Circuit Solicitor Jimmy Richardson, who wrote back that the state wouldn't move forward with a prosecution given the high barrier of proving an assault “beyond a reasonable doubt.” **Mahaney** did not respond to a voicemail and text message from MyHorryNews.com. Instead, city spokesman Donald Graham said in a phone call that **Mahaney** would not comment.

Laura Weaver, who made the complaint, stands by what she told investigators. “I wish I had gone in with a camera or a microphone,” she said. “I know what happened in that office. **Mike Mahaney** and [North Myrtle Beach City Councilwoman] Nikki Fontana do also. ... I know when I go to sleep at night, I will not have this worry on my head because I know that I did the right thing. Many women have come to me privately to thank me for standing up.” Weaver, who owns Glass Bottom Kayak Tours, met with **Mahaney** and Fontana on May 10 in **Mahaney's** office at city hall. Weaver said her business partner Tyler Watkins had sent an email to the city asking questions about a recently-passed ordinance to regulate the kayak tour businesses that operate out of Cherry Grove. In Weaver's account, **Mahaney** and Fontana called her into city hall and told her that city council wanted to shut down the businesses and that they were the only ones who could help her. “And that's when I started crying,” Weaver said. ““This isn't fair, this isn't right.’ The things they were saying to me, in my personal opinion, they were too afraid to say to Tyler who had all these questions.” Weaver said in her statement to police that **Mahaney** “became increasingly upset – putting his fingers in my face, leaning over me and then forcefully grabbing my leg between the thigh and knee with his left hand. I then loudly told him to get his hands off of me, and his fingers out of my face.” After she made the allegations, the city police turned the investigation over to SLED.

SLED's investigation did confirm that **Mahaney** touched Weaver on her leg and possibly her shoulder, according to the solicitor's office's letter. Weaver maintains the touch was not consensual, but Richardson's letter states that the elements of an assault and battery charge

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

include intentionally injuring or attempting to injure someone and having the ability to do so. Just a touch doesn't meet the bar, Richardson said in an interview. "If you and I are walking down a crowded sidewalk and we bump elbows or bump shoulders, that's not an assault; I didn't set out to hurt you," he explained. "There's got to be some type of malice, and from what the investigators put together – they had a third party in there – there was no hitting, slapping, pushing, any of that. It was just a touch on the leg and possibly a touch on the shoulder when she was crying."

Weaver maintains the touch was not a comforting gesture. "He grabbed me after I asked for the presence of my business partner," Weaver said. "I was being intimidated." The incident has taken a toll on Weaver, who said she now feels sick to her stomach when she drives by city hall. "I feel like this whole thing has completely decimated my opinion of this city," she said. "Not the people of this city but the government of this city." To get away, she said she's selling the kayak tour business and moving with Watkins to Costa Rica. "The intention to move has come from that," she said. "Selling the business is a byproduct of leaving the area." Weaver said she's not a litigious person, but she's weighing her legal options, especially now that the solicitor's office won't pursue charges. "Everybody has the right to walk into city hall and not fear for their safety," she said. "And I will stand up and fight for that again and again."

Mahaney has worked for the city for about 13 years.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Horry Independent, The (Conway, SC)
October 11, 2021

North Myrtle knew of 'constitutional issues' with targeting vulgarity. Now the ACLU is involved

Author/Byline: Christian Boschult

North Myrtle Beach City Council knew about the limitations of targeting certain types of protected speech before it passed an ordinance to regulate vulgarity and profanity, records show. First Amendment experts and the American Civil Liberties Union have decried the new law as unconstitutional.

On June 22, a visitor emailed city council to express disdain for the music coming from the Sky Bar on Main Street. "I must say I was quite shocked when I took my family to Main St at 10:00pm to purchase ice cream," Darryl King wrote. "As we sat at the tables on the city street I was appalled at the music that was being broadcast from a local bar. 'The Sky Bar' on Main St was blasting music that every other word was profanity." King's email complained of three children with him, ages 5 to 10 years-old, being "forced to listen to this garbage" while the bar played "a song that every other word was either M-F or G-D." The night following King's email to council, during the early morning hours of June 23, police officers visited the Sky Bar for a noise complaint, but the bar turned down the volume and "the music was kept at a reasonable level until the bar closed," according to an incident report.

In a response to King and city council the next day, city manager **Mike Mahaney** said there was little the city could do "because of constitutional issues regarding freedom of speech and expression." **Mahaney** noted in his June 23 email that in the six weeks prior, dispatch records showed no calls for a violation of the noise ordinance at Sky Bar. **Mahaney** told King and council in his email that "Because of the constitutional issues involved the City cannot issue a citation because someone is offended by the lyrics." That changed last week. Public records show the complaints kept coming from people upset about language they could hear from the Sky Bar, including a man from Stanley, North Carolina, who wrote to Mayor Marilyn Hatley about "the 'N' word, 'F' and 'wet ass 'p' word..." "Is there no ordinance for this type of offense and filthy language to be blasted to be heard for two blocks away?" Derek Summey wrote. "I would hope this is not something you and the city of north Myrtle beach would allow."

In July, city council met in executive session to discuss how it could address the vulgarity coming from the Sky Bar. Both vulgarity and profanity are protected categories of speech under the First Amendment, and the strict definition of obscenity precludes music from meeting the criteria. To be obscene, the Supreme Court has ruled that even sexually explicit speech that appeals to a prurient interest must also lack redeeming artistic, literary, political or scientific value. Music inherently has artistic value, and sometimes political value. Even rap group 2 Live Crew's "As Nasty as They Wanna Be" was found not to be legally obscene in 1992 despite the sexually-explicit lyrics that are pervasive throughout the entire album. In response to more complaints about the language contained in music broadcast from The Sky Bar, city attorney

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(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Chris Noury wrote back to Summey that "City Council is very aware of the 'music' and the sexually explicit and profane lyrics that can be heard by the general public who visit our Main Street area. Council recently met in executive session this past Monday (7/19) to discuss First Amendment issues related to this matter. Staff will meet with Council in the near future to further discuss how the City may possibly manage this issue potentially through a future ordinance." City spokesman Pat Dowling said in an email that "The City's position evolved over time," adding, "The matter does involve constitutional aspects but they do not necessarily block the path to regulating sound to reflect community standards." First Amendment expert Ken Paulson told MyHorryNews in an interview that if the city wanted to clamp down on vulgar language, it would merely have to pass an ordinance that holds all amplified speech to the same standards. On Oct. 4, the city passed an ordinance holding music with profane, vulgar or obscene language to a much lower decibel threshold than other types of music that don't contain such language, if the music can be heard in a public space like the sidewalk or street.

First Amendment experts say that because vulgarity and profanity are protected speech under the First Amendment and because music is not legally obscene, it's unconstitutional for the city to discriminate against those types of protected speech because of their content. The new law makes it illegal for anyone to use sound equipment to broadcast sustained or repetitive noise into the public that rises above 80 decibels when measured from the property line between 7:01 a.m. and 10:59 p.m. From 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. the limit drops to 60 decibels. Those restrictions apply to all music being broadcast using sound equipment. Sixty decibels is as loud as a conversation in a restaurant and 80 decibels is equivalent to a garbage disposal or a freight train at 15 meters, according to a Purdue University spreadsheet. But the city uses a different and more restrictive decibel threshold for music the city deems vulgar, profane or obscene. In those cases, the city has all but banned the targeted language before 11 p.m. and severely restricted it after 11 p.m. From 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., the rules cap the sound level of music with vulgar or profane language at 50 decibels when measured from the property line, and 30 decibels between 7:01 a.m. and 10:59 p.m. The Purdue spreadsheet says 30 decibels is as loud as a "quiet rural area," while 50 decibels is as loud as a "conversation at home." A chart provided by the city of North Myrtle Beach says 30 decibels is as loud as a whisper and 50 decibels is as loud as moderate rainfall.

On Thursday, the ACLU of South Carolina sent Hatley a letter asking the city to reject its new law and raising some constitutional problems with the city's ordinance. "Content-based laws like the Ordinance at issue here 'are presumptively unconstitutional and may be justified only if the government proves that they are narrowly tailored to serve compelling state interests,'" wrote Allen Chaney, the ACLU's director of legal advocacy. "The NMB Ordinance immediately fails this test because the City does not have a 'compelling interest' in enforcing prudish sensibilities or in maintaining its reputation as a 'family beach.'" Chaney noted that the city's ordinance "has illegally criminalized vast categories of protected speech. The Ordinance defines 'profane,' for example, as 'to treat with irreverence or contempt, crude, filthy, dirty, smutty, or indecent.' To start, these words are vague and subjective, fail to provide notice of what speech is illegal, and thereby create a serious threat of discriminatory enforcement."

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The city has not provided a list of words or lyrics that would meet the city's definitions. If a person is found guilty of amplifying their constitutionally-protected speech with the profanity or vulgarity up to the same decibel limits the city sets for non-vulgar and non-profane speech, that person's speech could land them in jail for up to 30 days or earn them a fine of up to \$500, or some combination of the two. "Beyond North Myrtle Beach's interest in honoring its citizens' constitutional rights, passing an unconstitutional ordinance is also ill-advised because it exposes the City to the imminent threat of litigation," Chaney wrote. A lawsuit challenging the new law "would be costly to North Myrtle Beach, even in the absence of damages."

Asked about the ACLU's letter, Dowling wrote in an email that "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. "The City is not prohibiting public speech of any kind," Dowling added. "Anyone who wants to enter a place where such music is broadcast is free to do so. Anyone who does not want to consent to listen to it does not have to enter a place where the music is broadcast and does not have to listen to it from an adjacent or other location. As for how the City would defend its ordinance in court, if challenged, that is not something we will share or debate publicly."

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The Sun News
July 14, 2021

Are free bus tickets causing a surge in the unhoused population in North Myrtle Beach?

By Adam Benson

“The large homeless population that is in Myrtle Beach has been able to get on the bus for free and ride up to North Myrtle Beach,” said North Myrtle Beach City Manager **Mike Mahaney** at a July 6 council meeting. Mayor Marilyn Hatley and city spokesman Donald Graham said **Mahaney** was referring to a fare-free policy by Coast RTA in place the last two years that’s led to a four-fold uptick in the city’s counted homeless population.

“Mr. **Mahaney** did mention the fact that since last year, there was no fee for the homeless to ride Coast RTA, and we have seen an influx of homeless since that program was put in place,” Hatley said. In 2020, Horry County had the highest counted population of homeless in South Carolina with 807 sheltered and unsheltered people, according to a state report. New Directions CEO Kathy Jenkins said only clients are given bus tickets through her organization so case workers can verify their whereabouts.

“I’m not really sure why somebody who’s homeless would go from Myrtle Beach to North Myrtle Beach when the services aren’t available,” she said. The remarks came near the end of a closely watched City Council meeting that included **Mahaney** showing police body camera footage of an encounter with the owner of a local business being fined for setting up rented beach equipment without a franchise. During deliberations, a resident asked if North Myrtle Beach had regulations about people staying overnight on public beaches, prompting **Mahaney** to explain current laws and then mentioning an increased homeless population. It’s illegal for anyone to sleep on the sand in Horry County or Myrtle Beach from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. North Myrtle Beach prohibits it from 9 p.m. to sunrise.

Graham told The Sun News city officials counted a reported 20 homeless people in the city in 2019, compared to 73 this year. “The increase in the homeless population in the city of North Myrtle Beach can be directly attributed to the Coast RTA bus transportation system,” Graham said. “The Coast RTA bus transit system provided free transportation which allowed transient people to travel to areas not previously available.”

Coast RTA currently runs 10 fixed routes through Georgetown and Horry counties, servicing more than 2,000 daily riders. The agency’s finance committee meets July 14. Spokeswoman Lauren Morris said RTA will resume fares within a few weeks at pre-COVID rates of \$1.50 for single rides and up to \$40 for multi-use passes. Its Route 17 runs through retail-heavy portions of North Myrtle Beach, with stops at Barefoot Landing and Coastal North Town Center.

Further details about the comment and the context are hard to come by for the public. North Myrtle Beach stopped broadcasting its meetings coming out of COVID protocols and minutes of the July 6 session had not been posted to the city’s website as of July 13. South Carolina’s open

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meetings law doesn't require communities to broadcast any of their deliberations, but nearly all of North Myrtle Beach's neighbors do it anyway: Conway, Myrtle Beach, Surfside Beach, the Horry County Council and Horry County Schools among them. But when it comes to sending people from Myrtle Beach elsewhere, city officials have no role in that but work through area nonprofit New Directions and the transit authority, spokesman Mark Kruea said.

"New Directions does provide transportation out of the area for people who wish to reconnect with their family support groups. And I believe they use some city-provided funding for that purpose – specifically bus tickets – but it's not a frequent thing," Kruea said. "And we certainly aren't sending people to any nearby communities via Coast RTA or any other means."

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The Sun News
June 8, 2020

‘We have no choice’: North Myrtle Beach considers slashing plans, tax hike in new budget
By Anna Young

North Myrtle Beach officials will have to slash about \$30 million out of their upcoming proposed budget and raise property taxes in order to keep services operating as the coronavirus pandemic persists. The proposed 2021 budget, which was unveiled during the city’s February budget retreat in Pinopolis, called for \$119 million that carried a \$27 million increase over last year. Now, officials will vote on a \$89 million budget after meeting on Monday to discuss the changes that need to be made to make up for impacts COVID-19 has had on the city. While a handful of capital projects originally proposed have been removed from the budget, the city is still proposing a 7.9 mill property tax hike.

The current property tax rate is 37.1 mills. Upon passage, the rate is suggested to increase to 45 mills. The proposed increase comes a year after council approved a budget that reduced its millage rate by 6.1 mill after paying off an eight-year bond used to purchase and construct the 162-acre North Myrtle Beach Park and Sports Complex. But officials say the increase is also necessary to keep operations sustained as the city recovers and navigates the coming months. “We have no choice but to raise our taxes,” Mayor Marilyn Hatley said, stressing that the millage increase is low for a full-service city. “There’s no way we can makeup for the millions we’ve already lost.”

Myrtle Beach leaders discuss challenges in crafting \$193 million budget amid coronavirus According to City Spokesperson Pat Dowling, North Myrtle Beach lost about \$2 million in revenue when the city shut down businesses and accommodations for almost two months. He said the city is projected to lose an additional \$6 million over the year. Councilman Hank Thomas expressed some concern about raising taxes, questioning if there was another way around it, but Hatley pressed it was the only option to maintain the services the city currently provides. If things get better and revenue increases, she said they’ll look to lower the millage in future budgets, as they’ve done in the past. “I know that none of us want to raise taxes, that’s nothing any of us wants to do, but I always feel that we are a proactive city and we always try to stay ahead of the game,” Councilwoman Nikki Fontana said. “Unfortunately, I think at this time we’re going to have to do this to keep us moving forward and take care of our citizens because they come first.”

The proposed budget also allows the city to employ 41 of the 186 positions that were furloughed in March. The original budget discussed in February included four major capital projects the city will now put on hold, City Manager **Mike Mahaney** said. Those included a \$14 million project to construct the 18th Avenue North ocean outfall and a multi-million dollar underground utilities plan in the Cherry Grove area. A \$10 million project to build a roughly 30,000 square-foot Emergency Operations Center and Data Management Center on the west side of the Intracoastal Waterway and multi-phased plan to expand the Park and Sports Complex for nearly \$34 million

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have also been halted. Officials had originally said the expansion would provide the available space to compete and host multiple large sports tourism events and continue to offer opportunities for adult recreation and youth leagues.

While no plans have been approved, officials discussed in February what they'd like to see if the sports complex is expanded. Surfside Beach unveils 'bare bones' budget with \$1.6M decrease following COVID-19 shutdown Ideally, the expansion would be broken into phases. The first phase would add six baseball fields and seven soccer fields, with one being a stadium field, for an estimated \$17.9 million. Both the soccer and baseball complexes would include concessions, restrooms, picnic shelters and a playground.

The second phase would include the construction of a roughly 17,000-square-foot family entertainment center at an estimated \$9.7 million that would include a 56-game arcade room, an interactive playground, a TAG interactive obstacle arena, birthday party rooms, food and beverage, and provide space for the city's annual Christmas light show. The third phase would include an estimated \$5.9 million water park with water slides, cabanas, a splash area with no standing water and one which will hold a great volume of water, and a retail store.

Despite the change, **Mahaney** said the city will still work to finalize those plans and send them out to bid in the fall since the city has already purchased the land. Council will consider how to proceed then, he said, adding the current budget provides a certain flexibility in the event of a second wave of coronavirus cases that results in the city shuttering again. "I'm all about maximum flexibility and what this 7.9 mill increase does, it provides me and all of our very confident department heads maximum flexibility," **Mahaney** said. "I hope we are able to go through without a second wave of the pandemic, but it could happen. We think long-term this is best for this city." The proposed budget will be subject to two readings, with the first reading of the budget ordinance and a public hearing to be held on June 15 at City Hall. The new budget must be approved by July 1, the start of the new fiscal year.

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[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Michael Greig Mahaney** is listed below. Removed were personal opinions of some of the people on the subject of the protest.]

Horry Independent, The (Conway, SC)
June 2, 2020

North Myrtle protest over George Floyd and systemic racism draws police, who join in
Author/Byline: Christian Boschult

Antonio Vereen was 4-years-old when his father died, and he was raised by a single mother. His biggest worry was that she wouldn't come home. "Now, at this day and age, I'm 19, I feel like I might not come home to her, and that's the biggest fear I have in my heart right now," he said. Vereen was one of dozens of people who marched down Main Street Tuesday afternoon to protest against systemic racism and police brutality following the death of George Floyd, a black man who passed away shortly after a white Minneapolis, Minnesota police officer named Derek Chauvin pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for more than 8 minutes while Floyd was stretched on the ground begging "I can't breathe!" Bystanders pleaded with Chauvin and the three other officers to check Floyd's pulse, but officers did nothing as Floyd cried out in agony until he became unresponsive. Even then, a video shows, Chauvin kept his knee on Floyd's neck. Chauvin has been charged but the other officers haven't.

The protest march on Tuesday was organized by two North Myrtle Beach High School students: Livingston Privett, 16, and Hailey Hegge, 17. "I'm so sick and tired of living through historical events in my so short-lived life," said Privett. "I've been exposed to injustice and inequality my entire life. I've seen it on the news and I'm sick and tired of seeing it. We want people that are refusing to talk or speak on this subject to finally realize that it's wrong, and speak out."

News of their event spread fast through social media on Monday, and drew a large crowd. "I was actually kind of scared that it was going to be just a few people," Hegge said. "I'm amazed how many people showed up and turned out."

The event caught the attention of North Myrtle Beach Director of Public Safety Jay Fernandez and City Manager **Mike Mahaney**, who showed up to talk to the demonstrators gathered near the shuttered Bi-Lo grocery store. "We agree 1,000 percent that was a murder; there's no question about that," Fernandez said, adding that the move Chauvin used is prohibited by North Myrtle's police policy, which also prevents officers from restricting any person's ability to breath. "What happened is not approved in law enforcement anywhere, to my knowledge, and it better not be."

Mahaney led the group in prayer before Fernandez and NMBPD officers escorted the protestors down Main Street and blocked traffic so they could use the road. The march was peaceful and no one was arrested. Officers with coolers handed out water bottles to the crowd.

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Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)
June 14, 2019

Behind North Myrtle Beach's failed growth plan, and its link to \$2 billion tax fraud case
Author/Byline: David Weissman

More than 1,000 acres of land west of the Intracoastal Waterway has been conserved during the past few years, but that wasn't the plan when North Myrtle Beach annexed and rezoned those properties. "It was intended to be commercial and high-density residential," Councilman Bob Cavanaugh said, recalling the 2011 expansion. "It was a logical growth area for residential communities." But eight years later, that growth largely hasn't and will not occur after the landowner put most of the property into conservation easements with the help of a company that's now a defendant in a federal lawsuit alleging \$2 billion in tax fraud. "I'm all for preserving property, but I don't want to be misled," Mayor Marilyn Hatley said, suggesting the developer deceived the city just to raise the value of the subsequent tax deductions.

North Myrtle Beach officials first began publicly discussing the potential annexation of about 1,800 acres west of the waterway in May 2011, according to planning commission meeting minutes. Most of the land being discussed belonged to three LLCs, all operated by the same people, that would later merge into just one: SLF IV/SBI Sandridge LLC. Myrtle Beach resident Ralph Teal, listed in deed transactions as co-manager of Sandridge LLC, was part of a group that had acquired the land just months earlier.

Previous Sun News reporting states that the undeveloped Sandridge tract was part of the more than 7,000 acres in Myrtle Beach and Hilton Head purchased in January 2011 by a partnership comprised of locally based SB Investment and Dallas-based Stratford Land. The deal also included Wild Wing Plantation. Teal, one of the local partners in the joint company, touted the purchase as a major discount thanks to a down real estate market and told The Sun News they were planning to move slowly in selling off or developing the land.

Annexation 'pointless'

When North Myrtle Beach began discussing the possible annexation, the prospect of the property owners potentially putting the land into conservation easements was an immediate point of contention. City spokesman Pat Dowling said at the time that the city didn't want to give Sandridge LLC that option as they moved forward on a potential development agreement. "The city is interested in annexing the Sandridge property because of the future revenue its development would generate," he said, according to previous Sun News reporting. "If Sandridge LLC is allowed to have the option to place its land under a conservation easement, there is the real risk that the land will never be developed, and its annexation into the city would be pointless."

The two sides eventually came to an agreement that the property owners could place any of its land, unless it's zoned commercial, into conservation easements. About 420 acres were zoned commercial, and some of that land is currently being developed into Park Pointe, a residential

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community. Jim Wood, the city's planning and development director, said during a public hearing after the agreement was reached that "the developers said they don't have any intentions to put any land under a conservation easement, but don't want to be blocked out of doing it in the future." The mayor recalled being told at the time by other local developers that Sandridge LLC would use the easements, but "it was just talk on the street." "I had nothing to prove that's what they'd do, and (my staff) assured me they wouldn't," she said.

Park and sports complex

City council signed off in June 2011 on the master development agreement, which also included the city purchasing about 136 acres of the Sandridge land on which to construct the North Myrtle Beach Park and Sports Complex. The city spent about \$2.7 million on the land, which city manager **Mike Mahaney** said was only about 52 percent of what the sellers claimed it was worth. The owners were planning to claim the rest of the value as a charitable tax deduction, though they'd be required to prove that additional value to the IRS, **Mahaney** said at the time.

Council approved a \$15 million general bond to buy the land and build the facility, creating an eight-year, 6.2-mill property tax increase, which expired this year, to pay it off. Numerous residents complained about the tax increase at the time, but city council has deemed the investment a resounding success. The park hosted 63 sports tourism events in 2018 leading to nearly \$23 million in "direct revenue," defined as revenue that goes directly from sports tourism events held at the facility to local businesses, according to the city's latest annual report. Revenue generated from public-private ventures including sponsorships, rentals and concessions was \$1.1 million last year, offsetting operations and maintenance costs, according to Dowling. "The sports complex has been a huge success, probably the best thing the city has done in the past 20 years," said Councilman Hank Thomas, who has served on council since 2008.

But while the sports complex has proven successful, the city's hopes it would be surrounded with residential and commercial growth have been dashed thanks to the use of easements, which are now under federal scrutiny. Horry County land records show about 1,003 acres — approximately 66 percent — of Sandridge LLC's land has been deeded since 2014 to other LLCs with names including Carolina Bays Resort, Magnolia Bay Resort and Ocean Grove Resort. But unlike those names imply, that land can never be developed because, shortly after each deed was transferred for \$10 apiece, they were all placed into conservation easements, which are permanent agreements by a landowner to preserve land in its natural habitat, such as farmland or forest. In exchange for landowners giving up future development rights, they can receive tax deductions typically equal to the difference between the value of the property before and after the restrictions are imposed.

Federal lawsuit

These tax deductions are where the Department of Justice is alleging more than \$2 billion in tax fraud occurred. EcoVest Capital Inc., an Atlanta-based company named in the lawsuit, helped execute each of the easement agreements in North Myrtle Beach, according to county deed records. The company did not exist until 2012, a year after North Myrtle Beach annexed the land. Teal, who serves on EcoVest's board, is among a handful of individuals also named in the

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suit, which was filed Dec. 18 in the Northern District of Georgia, seeking an order to stop them "from organizing, promoting, or selling an allegedly abusive conservation easement syndication tax scheme." The suit doesn't specifically state whether any or all of the Sandridge easement deals are among the 96 "syndicates" that the department alleges are fraudulent, but deed records show they appear to follow a similar pattern to the examples the DOJ explains in court records.

One of those examples involves a separate 28-acre parcel in North Myrtle Beach that was initially owned by Christian Academy of Myrtle Beach. The DOJ alleged the process involved the academy conveying 95 percent of the property in 2015 to Cypress Cove Marina Holdings LLC, operated by EcoVest, for \$1.04 million and then EcoVest selling ownership stakes of the property to customers at about \$9,500 per unit. Claud Clark, an Alabama-based appraiser also named in the suit, eventually valued the easement on the property at nearly \$39.7 million, and it created a tax deduction for customers of \$4.12 per dollar invested, according to court documents.

A Sun News review of county deed records found an additional 426 acres of property in North Myrtle Beach, including Cypress Cove, unaffiliated with Sandridge LLC that EcoVest helped put into easements. The DOJ's suit alleges the defendants are essentially using pass-through entities to sell tax deductions, which is illegal, and grossly overvaluing the easements, with customers typically receiving about \$4 in tax deductions for each dollar invested. EcoVest has denied these allegations in court documents. The department declined to comment on the case.

Increasing value

Thomas Wingard, a Columbia, S.C.-based appraiser, explained that the value of an easement is typically the difference between the value of the land if it were to be developed as its highest and best use versus its worth after encumbered by the easement. Determining a property's highest and best use includes four primary criteria: what's legally permissible, physically possible, financially feasible and maximally productive, he said.

Clark, who declined to comment for this article, determined the best use of the 28-acre parcel in North Myrtle Beach would be as a multi-family, resort-like development, according to the DOJ complaint. The North Myrtle Beach mayor noted that, with Sandridge LLC, the city worked with the developers to rezone those properties as part of the agreement. "I feel a little deceived, like the request for rezoning was just to make the land more valuable for when it did go into the easement," she said. "I have nothing to prove it, but I feel like that was the plan the whole time." The agreement switched the land west of the waterway's zonings from agricultural and general residential to more valuable designations, including multi-family residential, resort residential and business commercial.

Wingard said the process of getting land rezoned prior to putting it in an easement is common because it allows the appraiser to value the land based on the actual zoning as opposed to a projection of what zoning might be approved. Wingard, who said he didn't appraise any of the easements in North Myrtle Beach, noted that he's one of only a handful of appraisers that regularly appraise conservation easements because many in the field don't want to deal with the IRS scrutiny that goes along with them. That close scrutiny is also why many land trusts, which

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enter into agreements with property owners to monitor conservation easements, won't work with companies like EcoVest. S.C. State Director for The Nature Conservancy Mark Robertson said his organization, which holds about 160 easements in the state, won't participate with any "syndicate." "If it's a partnership or LLC, we insist on knowing the names of the individuals," he said. All of EcoVest's easements in North Myrtle Beach are held by North American Land Trust, according to county deed records.

Steven Carter, president of the Pennsylvania-based land trust, said in a statement: "Conserving small and select portions of open space in highly developed areas like North Myrtle Beach is just as important and urgent as protecting large landscapes. By saving land that would otherwise be lost to more impervious surfaces and high-rise resorts, North American Land Trust is protecting vital habitat like Carolina bays, xeric sandhill dunes and declining longleaf pine forests, as well as natural areas and scenic views for the Myrtle Beach residents and visitors to enjoy well into the future."

In court documents and a news release, EcoVest has insisted it conducted its business lawfully and ethically, and that the government is wrongfully contending that conduct it long encouraged is now fraudulent. The company stated it has conserved about 20,800 acres, more than half of that land being in South Carolina, and points to a decreasing amount of government spending on conservation as proof the private sector's efforts are more needed than ever. EcoVest officials, including Teal, declined interviews for this article through its public relations representative.

Not every North Myrtle Beach official is upset about the conservation easements, as Councilman Thomas, a local Realtor, called it "a pleasant surprise" and said he'd like to see more land throughout the county put into easements.

West of the Waterway Parkway

City staff declined, via Dowling, interviews for this article due to an ongoing negotiation with Sandridge LLC regarding a road that was to be built as part of the 2011 agreement. The road, which was to be named West of the Waterway Parkway, would run from the sports complex to Robert Edge Parkway and eventually extend to Water Tower Road, according to planning commission notes. There's currently only one road into the complex, and Hatley said they need to construct the parkway to ease traffic concerns during events. She recalled that traffic was backed up to S.C. 31 during last year's Great Christmas Light Show.

North Myrtle Beach filed a lawsuit against Sandridge LLC in 2017, alleging that the landowners weren't providing the deed to the right-of-way necessary for the city to move forward in constructing the road, though they motioned to dismiss the case in February while the two sides continue discussions. Cavanaugh said the road is supposed to be built using funding from the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study Long Range Transportation Plan, but they can't get that funding without cooperation from Sandridge LLC. The issue may be resolved soon, as a series of proposed amendments to the 2011 agreement appear on the city's June 17 council meeting agenda.

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The proposed amendments include the city acquiring an additional 96 acres from Sandridge LLC to expand the park and sports complex, and a requirement to add a lane expansion of Champions Boulevard from Robert Edge Parkway to the Park Pointe entrance by Nov. 1. A separate but related amendment would rezone about 145 acres of remaining undeveloped Sandridge LLC land from commercial to mid-rise multifamily residential, though it would include a stipulation that no more land could be placed into a conservation easement. The planning commission voted to recommend approval of the amendments, noting that conditions have changed significantly since the 2011 agreement that make commercial development unlikely.

Note: This story has been updated with information included in North Myrtle Beach's June 17 city council agenda and includes a statement from North American Land Trust that was submitted after initial publication.

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Horry Independent, The (Conway, SC)
February 25, 2019

North Myrtle Beach leaders lowering taxes

Author/Byline: Christian Boschult

North Myrtle Beach residents are getting a tax break. Homeowners will face a lower tax bill in 2020 due to a drop in the city's millage rate.

The city is almost done paying back an eight-year, \$15 million bond used to help pay for the North Myrtle Beach Park and Sports Complex, and it will drop the tax rate accordingly. "It will be paid off by March," said Mayor Marilyn Hatley on Monday during the city's budget retreat.

The millage rate will drop from 43.3 mils to 36 mils. One mil is equivalent to a \$10 tax on a \$250,000 house, meaning that a person who owns a \$500,000 home will see their property taxes drop by almost \$150. "The millage will drop to 36 is what we project, which will be pretty much as far as I can tell the lowest tax rate in the state for a full-service city," said city manager **Mike Mahaney**.

But it's not a done deal yet. Hatley said city leaders will make the change official with a vote this summer.

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Michael Mahaney
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The Sun News
February 21, 2015

Cherry Grove landowners question North Myrtle Beach leaders about dredging's price tag
By Charles D. Perry

One by one, North Strand property owners sounded off Saturday about a plan to dredge Cherry Grove's canals and stick them with the bill for the work. North Myrtle Beach officials want to dredge the finger channels and larger channels in Cherry Grove along House Creek from 42nd Avenue North to about 62nd Avenue North. The waterways were man made in the late 1940s and early 1950s and are no longer navigable at low tide. The project is expected to cost more than \$16 million and city officials have recommended charging the more than 700 landowners along the canals for the digging. Under the proposal, owners of single family unit parcels could pay as much as \$24,000 apiece (\$2,400 annually for up to 10 years). Owners of multi-family unit parcels could pay up to \$1,656 annually. North Myrtle Beach City Council will vote on the proposal March 16, but on Saturday morning leaders listened to residents for nearly an hour in front of an audience of about 220 people at city hall.

More than a dozen of those folks spoke and some agreed that the dredging is needed. But most questioned the price tag of the project and who should pay for it. "Please, spread the love," said Tim Ammons, who owns property near 59th Avenue North. "Don't put it all on our backs. That's ridiculous." North Myrtle Beach officials contend the cost of the dredging should not be spread among all city taxpayers because the greatest beneficiaries of the project will be those who live along the canals. They also say people who don't live in those areas oppose paying for the digging. "We're here in the community and believe me they stop me all the time," said City Manager **Mike Mahaney**, who added that he's heard from many people about this subject.

"Taxpayers that are not located on the canals have clearly indicated that they do not want to pay for this project." But Sheila Pope, who lives in the Raleigh, N.C., area and owns a home near 60th Avenue North, argued that the entire area will benefit from the dredging, not just the nearby homeowners. "This truly is a community asset," she said. "I can't tell you the number of times I go down to the boat ramp here in Cherry Grove and it is packed to the gills with vehicles. People other than the lot owners and the people who are residing down in Cherry Grove come there."

Gerald Graf, who owns a home on 55th Avenue North, said the dredging is no different than any other city infrastructure project. "Everyone should expect them to require maintenance," he said. "Just like roads, water lines, sewer lines, storm drains. The city takes those others on as their own and maintains them and pays for them with our taxes. I don't see any reason the channels shouldn't be treated the same." Graf, a retired engineer, also questioned the city's estimates for the work. He said he researched other dredging projects and found the prices were lower. "With the high estimates going in, you'll wind up with a very expensive project," he said. "It doesn't need to be that expensive."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Another problem some homeowners have with the project is that the dredging won't be wide enough to give them canal access, meaning they would have to spend extra money for further digging. "There's no access to the dredged area period," said Will Mann, who lives along 60th Avenue North. "It's a 24-foot wide cut, which I totally support and understand. Now consider a channel that's 100 feet wide sea wall to sea wall. That leaves 38 feet on either side that's going to remain just like it is at low tide. ... You cannot get to the dredged area."

City officials have said the main cut of the dredging will be 24 feet wide but as the sides settle it will work out to be nearly 30 feet, which is all the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will allow without purchasing private property. "We can't spend money that we borrowed on private property," **Mahaney** said. "The bond people have been very clear on that. So it doesn't matter how wide the canal is from your bulkhead to the bulkhead across the canal." Mann estimates it will cost homeowners \$10,000 to \$15,000 — on top of the city's \$2,400 annual bill — to gain access to the channels. "It's not worth that to me," he said.

As for the high cost, city officials have said the \$2,400 per year is the most residents would have to pay. If bids for the dredging come in lower, the landowners' bill would also decrease. However, if the bids are higher than anticipated, city officials say they will have to find another source to pay for the project. "The risk is on us," **Mahaney** said. "If this thing comes in over [budget], we will probably try to find the money to proceed rather than coming back and saying, 'OK, we're going to charge you more.'"

So far, the city has already spent \$1.25 million on litigation and research related to the project. North Myrtle Beach officials also plan to spend \$800,000 on the initial dredging and another \$800,000 if a follow-up dredge is needed in a few years. If the work receives final approval from council, the initial dredging would begin in November and likely be finished by the following March. The dredged material would be removed from the Tidewater Basin over a two-year period. If needed, a maintenance dredge would take place from 2021-2022.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Sun News
December 5, 2013

Former employee sues North Myrtle Beach over closed meetings

By David Wren

A former North Myrtle Beach employee is suing the city over allegations that Mayor Marilyn Hatley and others have violated the state's Freedom of Information Act. Mitchell Bellamy, who was terminated this year from his position as a custodian after a decade of employment with the city, says in court documents that North Myrtle Beach officials are not providing specific information about the reasons they meet behind closed doors in executive sessions during City Council meetings. City officials have not filed a response to Bellamy's lawsuit, which was filed late last month. City spokesman Pat Dowling said the city follows the requirements of the state law. No court date has been scheduled. According to state law, the presiding officer of a public meeting must announce a specific description of matters to be discussed during an executive session. Hatley, who runs the City Council meetings and announces the reasons for executive sessions, uses "vague" descriptions of the topics to be discussed, Bellamy said. Court documents show closed-door meetings have been held for topics including "pending legal matters" and "a contractual matter" although a specific lawsuit or contract is not referenced. On at least one occasion, Hatley did not announce a reason for a closed-door meeting, according to the lawsuit. "The law says you must state a specific purpose, and what they are stating is a general purpose," said Bill Rogers, executive director of the S.C. Press Association. "The public is not served well with these generalities and the citizens should be upset about it."

Bellamy also is suing City Manager **Mike Mahaney** for failing to include specific information about executive session topics on council agendas he prepares and City Attorney Chris Noury for allowing the alleged violations to take place during meetings he attends. Bellamy's lawsuit cites 15 instances when city officials allegedly violated the state's open-meeting laws. Bellamy – who was primarily responsible for cleaning city-owned beachfront and other restrooms – was terminated for cause in September, according to the lawsuit. Court documents do not specify the reason for Bellamy's termination. Dowling said Bellamy never raised concerns about the city's executive session procedures prior to his termination. Bellamy is represented by lawyer Kenneth Moss, who also represents former public safety director William Bailey in a pending wrongful termination lawsuit filed against the city.

Bailey was forced to retire from the city's public safety department after city officials said he lied to them about the storage of his police weapon after the gun was stolen from his truck. Moss could not be reached for comment Thursday. In addition to suing over the alleged FOIA violations, Bellamy says the city wrongfully refused to pay him for 300 hours of accrued and unused vacation time when he was terminated. Bellamy wants a judge to order the city to stop violating the state's Freedom of Information Act and to pay him three times the wages he claims are owed, plus costs and attorney's fees.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
August 19, 2013

Deerfield's financial woes blamed on past managers

Author/Byline: Ariel Barkhurst

The city of Deerfield Beach says its financial problems, including a credit downgrade and a negative financial outlook from its financial ratings firm, are the result of a decade of mismanagement by previous commissioners and administrators. City Manager Burgess Hanson said previous managers took millions from the city's reserve funds, relied too much on unstable property taxes for income, approved outrageous pension and benefit policies for firefighters, and hired too many employees. "You can't look at anything, any one department or one year's budget, in a vacuum," he said.

Fitch Ratings on Monday gave the city a negative financial outlook through at least next October. Its bonds, worth \$15 million and \$20 million, now have a below-average rating, which could mean higher interest rates on money borrowed in the future. The firm gave three main reasons, all surrounding a loss of faith in the city's ability to manage its money. It asked how the city ended up with an unforeseen \$2.4 million deficit in 2012, and questioned if the city could accurately project how much money it will get and spend. Fitch also noted Deerfield's rainy day fund has dropped to \$6.3 million, about half the minimum amount it should have. The firm also found the city tried to save money by merging its fire department with Broward Sheriff Fire Rescue in 2011, but instead has spent more -- \$19.3 million in 2010 vs. \$24.8 million in 2011.

All three problems have explanations that either predate Hanson and the current commission or could not have been anticipated, city staff said. The deficit in 2012 resulted from a number of factors, said finance director Hugh Dunkley.

* The city had to shell out higher-than-anticipated pension fund payments in fiscal year 2012 because municipalities don't get final information on how much they'll have to pay into pension funds until after budgets have been written, Dunkley said. That accounted for \$400,000 of the deficit.

*An employee union at the last minute balked at a 5 percent pay cut that other union employees already approved. So the city couldn't legally cut anyone's pay, although the budget reflected the 5 percent pay cut. That cost the city \$700,000, Dunkley said.

*Money coming in from the state of Florida was lower than expected by about \$1.1 million.

That's the kind of thing budgeters have to anticipate, said Michael Rinaldi, the head of the east regional team for Fitch ratings. "It wasn't just the using of reserves that raised our attention, it was the fact that the results failed to meet projections," he said. "The variance was a significant sum. That's a real red flag for us." The deficit in 2012 led the city to take \$2.4 million out of its reserve funds, leaving \$6.3 million. It should be around \$12 million to \$13 million, according to

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Michael Mahaney*****(Articles are in reverse chronological order)***

the city's own guidelines. But reserves have been declining since 2008, when they were at a high of \$23 million, Dunkley said. To balance the budget in 2009 and 2010, the city under former City Manager **Michael Mahaney** took millions from reserves, dropping them by \$4 million one year and nearly \$7 million the next. The city lost another \$4 million in 2011, Hanson's first year as city manager, a year in which the city had a new mayor and several new commissioners. Hanson said he hadn't gotten a chance to "right size" his staff or to eliminate costly pension and benefit deals for firefighters.

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Herald: Web Edition Articles
October 17, 2011

Golf sign re-ignites dispute between N. Myrtle Beach, Barefoot Resort

By David Wren

A dispute over the wording on a commercial sign at Barefoot Resort and Golf here has shed light on city officials' rivalry with Myrtle Beach and their ongoing battle with the golf resort's owners over how they market their businesses. The sign – at the Callaway Performance Center located at Barefoot Resort and Golf's driving range – identifies the center as being in Myrtle Beach instead of its actual North Myrtle Beach location. City Manager **Mike Mahaney** says that is just another example of Barefoot Resort and Golf's efforts to disassociate its golf courses and other businesses from the city. Barefoot Resort and Golf – which has four golf courses in the resort – also calls Myrtle Beach its home on the resort's web site. "The message many residents and businesses in North Myrtle Beach get is that the dominant business interests in Barefoot Resort and Golf look down their noses at the rest of North Myrtle Beach, that you are ashamed to be associated with a city that provides services to you," **Mahaney** said in an Oct. 6 e-mail to Ron Hendrix, chief financial officer of Barefoot Companies, the parent to Barefoot Golf and Resort.

The e-mail also was sent to members of the City Council. The Sun News obtained a copy of the e-mail last week. "This has been a concern of all of the city's elected officials for a number of years," **Mahaney** said in the e-mail. "I am sure the mayor and others would be glad to further articulate the complaints that they have received from their constituents on this issue over the years." Hendrix dismissed **Mahaney's** concerns in an e-mailed response, telling the city manager: "I believe that you have more important things to attend to, as do I." Mayor Marilyn Hatley could not be reached for comment. City Councilman Bob Cavanaugh declined to comment, telling The Sun News on Friday that he had not had time to read the e-mails. However, Cavanaugh responded to the e-mail exchange on Oct. 6 with the message "keep pressure on." Cavanaugh apparently meant to send that e-mail to **Mahaney** but instead sent it to Hendrix.

The e-mail exchange started after a city resident took a photograph of the Callaway Performance Center sign and provided it to **Mahaney**, who would not identify the resident. That prompted **Mahaney** to contact Dave Genevro, general manager of Barefoot Resort's golf courses, where the driving range and Callaway Performance Center are located. "Dave, attached was dropped off at my office," **Mahaney** wrote in the e-mail to Genevro, referring to the photograph. "Specifically, they were upset with the Performance Center reading Myrtle Beach. Please let me know what I should tell City Council."

Genevro forwarded a copy of **Mahaney's** e-mail to Hendrix and others Hendrix told **Mahaney** in a return e-mail that he was perplexed by the city manager's concerns over the signage and added, "Personally I think this is a bit ridiculous myself." "When I look at the various taxes that Barefoot-related entities contribute to your budget, I think petty issues like whether a sign has Myrtle Beach or North Myrtle Beach on it should be a non-issue," Hendrix told **Mahaney**. "Again, I think we have more pressing issues that need to be addressed, such as bringing in more

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

jobs to the area, diversifying our economy, infrastructure issues and budgetary issues.” The e-mail exchange exposed a prickly issue with some city officials – that North Myrtle Beach often feels overshadowed by its larger and more famous neighbor to the south. **Mahaney** told Hendrix that North Myrtle Beach “is not an appendage of Myrtle Beach, but a significant destination in its own right, with natural resources, amenities and a positive character all its own.” **Mahaney** urged Barefoot Resort and Golf to “take some pride in the city in which Barefoot is actually located.” “Do you really think that if golfers or vacationers arrive in Barefoot and see signs saying ‘Welcome to North Myrtle Beach’ they will flee?” **Mahaney** asked Hendrix. “Why not begin to embrace North Myrtle Beach instead of consistently holding it at bay?” City spokesman Pat Dowling said there is no animosity with Myrtle Beach, calling it instead “a friendly rivalry based on pride in one’s city.” Dowling also said the dispute with Barefoot Resort and Golf does not extend to the residents of Barefoot Resort, “who are great participants in city life in many ways.”

To Hendrix, marketing this area’s golf courses and attractions under the Myrtle Beach brand is simply a reflection of that city’s far-reaching name recognition. “Our marketing area is known nationwide as Myrtle Beach or The Grand Strand and most of the business owners at Barefoot are well aware of this,” Hendrix told **Mahaney**. “Again, if North Myrtle Beach wants to distinguish itself from Myrtle Beach, I personally think that you will have to change the city’s name.” North Myrtle Beach got its name in 1968 when the city’s four beaches – Windy Hill, Ocean Drive, Crescent Beach and Cherry Grove – joined together and residents decided to take advantage of the Myrtle Beach name while also distinguishing its geographic location.

City spokesman Pat Dowling said relations between the city and Barefoot Resort and Golf were further damaged during this year’s Monday After the Masters celebrity golf tournament, which was held at Barefoot Resort. Myrtle Beach Mayor John Rhodes was being interviewed on ESPN radio following the event and he welcomed listeners to Myrtle Beach instead of North Myrtle Beach, Dowling said. “Perhaps a savvy PR move on the Myrtle Beach mayor’s part, but not a move that would endear him or Monday After the Masters’ leadership to North Myrtle Beach leadership and residents,” Dowling said.

Hendrix told The Sun News that this month’s e-mail exchange typifies the city’s attitude toward Barefoot Resort and Golf. The city focuses on petty spats, Hendrix said, while refusing to work with residents and business owners on more important issues – such as the economic impact and cost of repainting the Barefoot Resort bridge – and continually downplaying the amount of property, accommodations, retail and admissions taxes the resort contributes. Dowling said the taxes and fees generated by property and businesses at Barefoot Resort amount to only half of what it costs the city to provide police, fire and other services to the area. “Some members of City Council and quite a few residents of North Myrtle Beach would like the pride they have in Barefoot Resort and Golf to be reciprocated,” Dowling said.

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Sun News
September 12, 2011

Barefoot bridge plans concern some residents

By Adva Saldinger

Barefoot Resort residents and business owners voiced their concerns about North Myrtle Beach's plans to shut down the Barefoot swing bridge for 49 days for cleaning and repainting during a contentious meeting Monday. Barefoot residents said they are concerned about a major thoroughfare into and out of their community being completely shut down because of the disruptions it would cause. The city has planned for more than a year to treat and repaint the bridge as part of its upkeep. After exploring various possibilities officials decided that the current plan, which will close the bridge for more than a month and cost \$907,000, was the most efficient and cost effective option, said **Mike Mahaney**, the North Myrtle Beach city manager. Residents and visitors to Barefoot Resort will have to go around and take Water Tower Road to access the homes and golf courses during the closure.

Mahaney led off the meeting by criticizing some of the false e-mails circulated in the community. "It is ludicrous to say this was done under the cover of darkness," he said. There have been about 10 public meetings about the project and local homeowners received e-mail notices and newsletters that discussed the bridge work, **Mahaney** said. Residents complained of having to take longer alternate routes and possible safety issues in the case of an emergency. Tom Staats, a partner in the Barefoot Cos. and a board member of several of the homeowners associations at Barefoot said he wanted to have a civil discussion about alternatives and let residents voice their concerns. "My concerns are the concerns of our close to 3,000 homeowners," he said. "The daily routine of our residents would be altered dramatically and business would be affected."

In addition to the significant disruption to residents lives – 10 mile drives to the grocery store, more money spent on gas at a time few can afford it – there is also a concern about safety and sending many more cars through the single-family home neighborhoods, Staats said. "We recognize it's an inconvenience," **Mahaney** said. "The board has to make decisions not just about Barefoot Landing and Barefoot Resort but city wide. How can we justify [the cost]?" The city considered trying to have the repairs done while keeping a single lane of the bridge open, but found that it would take more than twice as long and cost more than twice as much as the contract they have in place, said Kevin Blayton, the public works director. The city has already allocated the \$907,000 for the project in the 2011-2012 budget.

Staats said the city should consider a third option, which would keep one lane of traffic open and cost about \$500-600,000 more than the current contract. Staats was one of more than 120 at the crowded meeting Monday night. Some residents said their main concerns related to public safety, both in the case of something like the 2009 wildfire and medical emergencies. With so many retired residents, and frequent medical emergencies the bridge closure would mean it would take residents longer to get help, said Glen Talley, a retired Barefoot resident. Jay

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Fernandez, the North Myrtle Beach director of public safety, said that plans are in place for the construction period. An additional police officer, an additional firefighter and an emergency medical technician would be stationed in Barefoot Resort for the duration of the project, he said. The pumper truck at the fire station would be switched out for a truck that is both a ladder and pumper truck during the project and the city is in negotiations with the county to try to get an ambulance stationed in Barefoot during the project, Fernandez said.

In the case of a major emergency the contractor on the job could reopen the bridge within six to eight hours, Blayton said. Talley said he was also concerned that this disruption and safety issue will be ongoing as the bridge will need to be continually repainted. Blayton said the paint job should last about 15 years. "It's time that we consider other options," Talley said. He called on city officials to research building a new bridge, a permanent span bridge, given the considerable costs of manning and repairing the swing bridge.

Michael Atwood agreed. "Let's get ourselves another bridge instead of wasting money on this one," he said. But Kevin Blayton said that there are many challenges in building a new bridge. A span bridge would likely cost between \$10 million and \$15 million and would require about five years just for the permitting process. The bridge would likely require a property transfer from Horry County and could not be built to meet public road standards for grading in its current spot, he said.

Even if a new bridge was considered the paint job has to be completed, Blayton said. The bridge itself is sound and in good shape but needs to be painted to prevent any structural damage that could result from rust or not being treated, he said. Mayor Marilyn Hatley said that the city can look at doing a study of the costs and feasibility of building a new bridge early next year. "We will have time because the drawbridge will be painted, then we will let you know what the cost would be," she said.

If residents want a new bridge, a referendum and special tax district would probably be required to raise the funds, Hatley said. The project will go ahead with the contract in place because it has to for the health of the bridge, Blayton said. The city will be meeting with the contractor to set a firm timetable for the project this week, but it should begin in early November, with the bridge closing in late November or early December, he said.

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Sun News (Myrtle Beach, SC)
June 24, 2011

North Myrtle Beach pays \$47,802 in dashcam lawsuit

By David Wren

The city of North Myrtle Beach paid \$47,802 in lawyers' fees trying to keep the public from seeing an obscenity-laced police dashcam video of a confrontation between a former police officer and the wife of state Rep. Tracy Edge. The fees stem from a lawsuit filed by William Bailey, the city's former public safety director, and The Sun News in October against North Myrtle Beach after the city refused to release the video under terms of the S.C. Freedom of Information Act. The city had claimed the video was exempt from disclosure because it involved a personnel matter. City Manager **Mike Mahaney** fired the police officer - former Sgt. Jeff Senter - because of his actions shown on the video.

Horry County Judge Benjamin Culbertson ruled last month, however, that the video is a public document. Culbertson said "the public's right to know the activities of a police officer while on duty and the possible reasons for his discharge outweigh any of the defendants' rights to privacy." The city paid \$22,184 to its law firm - Gignilliat Savitz & Bettis of Columbia - to defend the lawsuit. The city, as the loser in the case, also was ordered to pay the fees for lawyers representing Bailey and The Sun News. North Myrtle Beach paid \$20,836 to Kenneth Moss, who represented Bailey, and \$4,782 to The Sun News lawyer Jay Bender. The nearly hourlong video shows a heated altercation between Senter and Melissa Edge that started at 9:45 p.m. Sept. 14 at the city's fire station on Sea Mountain Highway.

The video shows a combative Melissa Edge, who admits drinking alcohol before the event and at one point threatens Senter with his job if he takes her to jail. Senter - a 16-year veteran of the city's police department - states numerous times on the video that she is intoxicated, but he does not arrest her. Instead, he urges her to get psychological help and arranges for Tracy Edge to pick her up and take her home. No charges were filed, and Senter did not write a report about the incident. Senter told The Sun News last fall that police Capt. Rick Buddelmeyer - the acting public safety director at the time - told him not to write an incident report. "He [Buddelmeyer] said, 'We don't want the press to find out about this,'" Senter said.

Senter said his actions initially were cleared by supervisors, but he was fired after The Sun News and other media requested copies of the video. Senter had joined The Sun News and Bailey in the lawsuit to force the city to release the video. He withdrew from the lawsuit in November, however, saying he did not want the video released because it shows Melissa Edge in a mentally distressed state. The Sun News learned that Senter withdrew from the lawsuit days after Melissa Edge had paid \$660 for Senter's membership to the city's Aquatic and Fitness Center.

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
December 9, 2010

AUDIT OF FESTIVAL RAISING MORE QUESTIONS

Author/Byline: LARRY BARSZEWSKI

An independent audit has determined that Deerfield Beach poured \$1.7 million into the Mango, Brazilian and Founder's Day festivals between 2006 and 2008 with little accountability for how the money was spent or safeguards to prevent fraud. Auditors go on to accuse high-ranking city employees at the time of doing transactions in such a way that kept the City Commission in the dark about how the money was spent. The city spent close to \$1 million on the Mango Festival alone during the three-year period, the forensic audit said, not including money spent for in-kind services. The findings in the audit, conducted by Kessler International, were dated Nov. 26. The 137-page document was ordered by the city earlier this year as part of a larger series of audits looking at past city funding practices.

The audit estimated the Mango Festival produced \$1.7 million in revenue during the time period, but bank statements for the nonprofit group running the festival show only \$216,000 in income. The rest of the money is unaccounted for, the audit said. "What was observed during the investigation was outrageous spending by city employees and the city managers who were able to conceal and commingle transactions to keep the governing body of the city [the City Commission] unaware of the true costs of these lavish events," auditor Michael Kessler said in the report's cover letter. "This independent audit documented the shameful exploitation and gross financial mismanagement of taxpayer funds occurring during the leadership of City Manager Larry Deetjen, Interim City Manager Ada Graham-Johnson and City Manager **Michael Mahaney**," Kessler wrote in the letter. Deetjen and **Mahaney** are no longer with the city and Graham-Johnson is the city clerk.

"It's very disturbing," Commissioner Bill Ganz said of the audit. "It looks like we were hemorrhaging cash when it comes to these festivals." The commission, partly because of concerns about past practices and partly because of the city's tight budget, this year cut off all funds to the festivals after greatly reducing its contributions last year. "We don't give anybody money without their going through hoops," Mayor Peggy Noland said. "This will never happen again." The audit also raised concerns about Commissioner Sylvia Poitier, who was criticized in an earlier audit for voting on grants where she had a conflict of interest. This time, the audit questioned her connections to the festivals.

Among the audit's findings:

Poitier and former commissioners Steven Gonot and Pam Militello requested and received blocks of tickets to the Mango Festival for free and distributed them to garner political support.

Poitier, along with former parks manager George Edmunds and a few others, was on hand when beer and gate revenues from the 2008 Brazilian Festival were counted. Kessler estimates that \$28,000 more than the \$44,820 reported should have been collected and questions what

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happened to the missing money. Cash count documents from that meeting have been destroyed, Kessler said. Kessler found 2,633 checks totaling \$225,304 issued by the city to "miscellaneous vendors" during the three-year period. While city officials said this could include everything from utility overpayments to organizations that don't do business with the city on a regular basis, Kessler said the large volume of such checks creates an opportunity to embezzle funds from the city.

Kessler's audit also indicates the possibility of rampant fraud concerning the festivals, partly because the city's accounting system allows vendors' names to be changed retroactively. "This weakness in the accounting system allows employees to issue checks to one payee and change the name on the check register to disguise it," the audit said.

The city plans to forward the audit to the Broward State Attorney's Office and the Broward Sheriff's Office to see if criminal proceedings are warranted, City Manager Burgess Hanson said. The city also plans changes based on the audit's findings, he said. "I'm still going through the report," Hanson said. "We've already addressed many of these issues." Hanson said most of the city employees mentioned in the audit are no longer with the city. Edmunds, who had been manager of the Parks Department, was laid off in September as part of a department reorganization, officials said.

The Brazilian Festival moved to Miami last year and the Mango Festival was canceled. This year's Mango Festival was shut down in June after one day because of financial problems resulting from poor attendance and unpaid vendors. One of the purposes for the Mango Festival is to raise scholarship money. The festival reported \$21,500 in scholarships over the three years audited, although auditors said the actual figure was \$12,500. The audit is one of three being done for the city by Kessler.

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Sun News
October 28, 2010

The Sun News joins FOIA lawsuit against North Myrtle Beach
By David Wren

The Sun News and former city Police Sgt. Jeff Senter today joined a lawsuit that accuses the city of violating the state's Freedom of Information Act by withholding a police videotape of a confrontation between Senter and Melissa Edge, the wife of state Rep. Tracy Edge. The lawsuit - initially filed last week by William Bailey, this city's former public safety director -- asks a judge to force City Manager **Mike Mahaney** to immediately release the video. It also asks that a judge force the city to pay all legal costs associated with the lawsuit. No court date has been scheduled. Bailey's lawsuit only named **Mahaney** as a defendant. The Sun News and Senter added the city as a defendant when they joined the lawsuit today. **Mahaney** has said he is withholding the video because its disclosure "would constitute unreasonable invasion of personal privacy." **Mahaney** has said he believes the city will lose a court challenge, but he wants a judge to force him to release the video as protection against possible future litigation.

State court rulings previously have declared such police videos are public documents obtainable under the FOIA. "We'll wait to go through that process and whatever the judge determines, the city will abide by the judge's conclusions," city spokesman Pat Dowling said. Senter, a 16-year veteran with the city's police department, was fired on Oct. 6 as a result of the incident with Edge. Senter says he was wrongfully terminated and the city has scheduled a public grievance hearing on the matter for 9 a.m. on Nov. 8 in the training room at City Hall.

Meanwhile, city resident and former mayoral candidate Gene Sheppard filed a police incident report last week that also accuses **Mahaney** of violating the state's FOIA laws. Sheppard wants the city police to issue a criminal warrant against **Mahaney**, according to the report. Willful violations of the state's FOIA are misdemeanors punishable with a \$100 fine and up to 30 days in jail for the first offense and escalating fines and jail terms for subsequent offenses. Dowling said the city has conducted an initial investigation of Sheppard's complaint and Rick Buddelmeyer, the acting public safety director, has decided to turn the matter over to an outside law enforcement agency "to avoid any perception of impropriety." Dowling said it is not clear which agency will take over the investigation.

Senter has said he was on duty and talking with city employees at the Cherry Grove fire station at about 9:45 p.m. Sept. 14 when Melissa Edge drove her car into the parking lot. Senter said he and Melissa Edge had been close friends but he had not talked with her since late June. Melissa Edge got out of her car and confronted Senter, he said. "She wanted to know if I had been talking about her," Senter said. "She was very emotional, and she said she wasn't going to leave." Senter said he activated his police car's dashboard camera and told Melissa Edge that she was being recorded. The confrontation lasted for several minutes and Senter and his supervisor -- police Lt. Mike Baldassarre -- decided to ask Tracy Edge to come to the fire station and escort his wife home. The two officers also consulted with Buddelmeyer on how to handle the situation, Senter

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

said. No charges were filed and Senter did not write a report about the incident. He said he did not see any reason to arrest Melissa Edge. Melissa Edge has apologized for the incident and Tracy Edge said in a written statement last week that neither he nor his wife “asked for any special treatment and have had no role or involvement in actions or decisions made by the city.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Sun News
October 18, 2010

North Myrtle Beach refuses to release police dashcam video

By David Wren

North Myrtle Beach officials are refusing to release a police dash-cam video of an incident involving Melissa Edge -- the wife of state Rep. Tracy Edge -- last month at the city's Cherry Grove fire station, a move that lawyers say is a clear violation of the state's Freedom of Information Act. The video was recorded on city property by an on-duty police officer. City Manager **Mike Mahaney** said Monday that he believes the city would lose a legal challenge over whether the video is public record. However, **Mahaney** said he wants a judge to force the city to release the video as protection against any possible lawsuits filed by Edge or others. Melissa Edge did not return a telephone call seeking comment. "If a judge tells me we have to release it, that gives me some immunity," **Mahaney** said Monday. "I feel like that's what is best for the city."

The Sun News requested a copy of the video last month, as well as copies of any police incident reports and dispatch tapes related to the incident. In a letter last week, **Mahaney** said the city does not have any reports or dispatch records from the incident. **Mahaney** said he would not release the video because "it constitutes information of a personal nature where the public disclosure thereof would constitute unreasonable invasion of personal privacy." The state's Freedom of Information Act includes a "privacy exemption" that allows public bodies to withhold personal information. The law does not specifically list the types of information that are considered private.

Jay Bender, a Columbia lawyer and an expert in the state's Freedom of Information Act, called the city's decision to withhold the video "nonsense." "There is nothing private about a person's appearance in a public place that is captured on the dash-cam video of a police car," he said. Bender said the fact that Melissa Edge was not charged with a crime makes the video's release more important. "That's all the more reason to see it to see if a charge was warranted," he said. A state Court of Appeals ruling already has said that the manner in which a police department carries out its duties is of "vital public interest that outweighs their desire to remain out of the public eye." The court in that 2004 case forced the York County Sheriff's Department to release records it had claimed were private to a newspaper reporter who was writing about alleged misconduct within the department. Bender represented the newspaper in that case.

Mahaney said he is familiar with the court's ruling and believes it would apply in this case. He said he would release the video if The Sun News were to get a court-ordered declaratory judgment. The Sun News has not seen the video. **Mahaney**, however, has confirmed that an incident involving Melissa Edge took place last month at the city's fire station. **Mahaney** did not give details of that incident. Jeff Senter, the police officer who responded to the incident and recorded it on his dash-cam, no longer is employed by the city as a result of the incident. **Mahaney** would not say whether Senter was fired or what specific actions led to his departure.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

from the city. Senter could not be reached for comment. A telephone number in his name has been disconnected. **Mahaney** said he also has disciplined other officers as a result of the incident. He would not say which officers have been disciplined or what actions were taken. "I'm well aware of what transpired and I've taken the appropriate actions," he said. "If you are successful in getting the video, you'll have some of the answers. But I'm not going there."

Kenneth Moss -- a Little River lawyer who is representing William Bailey, the city's former public safety director, in a lawsuit against North Myrtle Beach -- said his request for the video also was denied. Moss said he requested the video under the state's Freedom of Information Act because it might be useful in Bailey's wrongful termination case against the city. Moss said he believes the city is violating state law by withholding the video to protect the reputation of public officials. "Based on what we've heard about the video, it would include information that would be embarrassing to elected officials," Moss said. "They're trying to stop that from happening." Mayor Marilyn Hatley said the decision to withhold the video was made by lawyers who handle personnel issues for the city. "I've only seen what the attorneys say," Hatley said. "Just because they say it doesn't mean that I agree with it." Hatley declined to say whether the video should be released, but said "everyone who is in the city should be treated equally." "I don't think that the city should cover up for anyone," Hatley said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun News, The (Myrtle Beach, SC)
July 2, 2010

New North Myrtle Beach city manager was fired twice - Latest hire dismissed from 2 jobs since 2007

Author/Byline: Janelle Frost

North Myrtle Beach officials stand confident in their new city manager choice, despite his history of being dismissed from similar positions twice since 2007. **Michael Mahaney** "stood out" among the other candidates and has experience with a beach community, said Mayor Marilyn Hatley. City Council unanimously approved hiring him on Wednesday. **Mahaney**, of Deerfield Beach, Fla., said Thursday that he has done his homework concerning North Myrtle Beach and is ready to work. **Mahaney** comes to the city after he was terminated in January from his post as city manager in Deerfield Beach - a city of 77,000. He had worked for Deerfield Beach since April 2007, where he managed 798 full and part-time workers and a budget of \$138 million in the fiscal year 2009-2010, according to Rami Altherr Musto, the city's marketing communications manager. **Mahaney** was hired for that job roughly two months after being terminated from his job as county administrator in Nassau County, Fla., in 2007, according to Nassau County Human Resources Coordinator Tina Keiter. He'd worked for the county for 3 years.

Hatley said Thursday that the City Council was aware of **Mahaney's** previous dismissals, and did not see it as a factor in whether he can do the job as city manager. "It seems to be a trend of all city managers where they are either terminated or resign," said Hatley, who said each candidate had multiple jobs as a city manager. "The position is so political. There may be a change of council or may be a personality conflict where a city manager is either fired or resigned. Those things happen. We were very fortunate to have [retiring city manager] John Smithson for 30 years. That's just unheard of."

Mahaney said it was a split decision in both of his terminations since 2007. They happened immediately after elections, he said, highlighting that the wife of a Deerfield Beach fire inspector was elected mayor after **Mahaney** demoted her husband because the man did not pass a test for recertification and to get his license back. According to Jan. 15 meeting minutes, Deerfield Beach Commissioner Bill Ganz said he made a motion to terminate **Mahaney** because of "issues to do with leadership, communication and trust," and that it was not done politically or that there was a personal vendetta between him and **Mahaney**, but that it "was a business decision." **Mahaney** said it was a 3-2 vote. The Nassau County Board of County Commissioners approved to terminate **Mahaney** without cause and included a statement that said "The Board will at no point in the future disparage in any way **Michael Mahaney**," according to the commissioners' meeting notes from Feb. 8, 2007.

Mahaney said by phone Thursday that he came to North Myrtle Beach Monday morning and explored a dredging project in the Cherry Grove section of the city; the Barefoot Resort bridge, which is in need of a cleaning, painting and minor structural repairs; and parking at the beach. "I

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

did additional research that I couldn't do online," **Mahaney** said. "There's no substitute for what's on the ground. I tried to prepare myself in anticipation of the council's questions for the highest chance of success. Apparently it worked."

The council chose 50-year-old **Mahaney** - who spent summer vacations in Cherry Grove as a child - after interviewing him and two other final candidates for the position in a closed meeting Wednesday. The other candidates included Alan Lanning, a former city manager for Castle Pines North, Colo., and Mark Watson, a former city administrator for Yuma, Ariz.

Mahaney is expected to begin work for North Myrtle Beach early this month, contingent on the results of his physical. His annual salary was not released Thursday because city officials said his contract was not completed and had not been signed. Once he starts work, **Mahaney** said he plans to meet with each elected official and department head to learn their goals, objectives and concerns. He said 20 years of his career have been dealing with coastal issues such as hurricane evacuation, coastal renourishment such as sand placement, and economic development with increasing tourism and destination visits.

According to Nicole Aiello, city spokeswoman, **Mahaney** has a Master of Business Administration degree from James Madison University and a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Virginia Tech.

North Myrtle Beach officials began the process of looking for a new city manager after Smithson announced in February that he will retire from the post. Officials hired the Mercer Group to assist in the search, which had received a total of 124 applications, city officials said. Smithson, who has been with the city since January 1980 and was appointed to city manager in August 2003, has stayed on as city manager and will work with **Mahaney** until Smithson sets his own retirement date. Smithson said in a statement in February that he wanted to spend more time with his family.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
January 26, 2010

FIRED DEERFIELD MANAGER GETS TEMP JOB -- CLOSE TO HIS OLD ONE

Author/Byline: Linda Trischitta; Posted by Anthony Man

Former Deerfield Beach City Manager **Michael Mahaney** did not waste any time finding a way to keep the lights on while he searches for another municipal management job.

Fired Jan. 15 by a divided city commission, **Mahaney** was hired Jan. 25 by CVE Master Management Company, Inc., the volunteer board that oversees Century Village East. **Mahaney** will consult full-time, on a temporary basis, for this 55-and-older, gated community with 15,000 residents in 8,500 condo units that is like a small city.

“**Mike** is working as a consultant for us to get our administrative and organizational house in order,” CVE Master Management President Ira Somerset confirmed Monday. CVE Master Management Company oversees delivery of services like water, sewer, refuse collection, cable and security to residents.

CVE Master Management approached **Mahaney** for the position. “He is an attractive candidate because he has a lot of experience with management and organizational issues, and that’s what we’re tapping into,” Somerset said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
January 21, 2010

DEERFIELD COMMISSIONERS FIRES CITY MANAGER MAHANNEY

Author/Byline: Linda Trischitta

A divided City Commission fired City Manager **Michael Mahaney** at a Jan. 15 special meeting. **Mahaney** was suspended Jan. 5 after Commissioner Bill Ganz complained about communication problems between them and faulted his leadership. A proposal to give **Mahaney** a 90-day probationary period was debated at length but was unacceptable to Ganz, who said the city manager "would walk around as a wounded leader. He'd be a dead man walking."

The commission's 3-2 decision was made before an audience of more than 100 people at the start of a long holiday weekend. Of 15 who spoke, 13 called for giving **Mahaney** another chance. "Since Deerfield hired him, I've seen very good fiscal responsibility," resident Michelle Stevens said before the meeting. "Is he performing? Yes he is, and very well. Personally I think that it's a mistake." Former District 1 Commissioner Pam Militello, who served with **Mahaney**, said, "None of them gave a good enough reason for taking the action that they did." She said the firing "seems like a witch hunt. **Mike** was always respectful and responsive to me and I found him to be very easy to work with." "I suggest we compromise and give an honest man a second chance," said Commissioner Joe Miller, who along with Vice Mayor Sylvia Poitier voted to keep **Mahaney**.

In his 33 months in the job, **Mahaney** saw seven of his bosses come and go. Two commissioners were arrested on unrelated corruption charges - one resigned and one was suspended by Gov. Charlie Crist - and two replacements served two-month terms before elections were held. In March 2009, Peggy Noland was elected mayor, and Miller and Ganz won commission seats. Both Miller and Ganz are new on the commission. Despite pressure on the \$139 million budget caused by falling property tax revenue, **Mahaney** avoided laying off any of the city's 798 employees. The city also maintained its Aa3 bond rating from Moody's Investors Service.

Mahaney's replacement must negotiate labor contracts with the city's three unions, deals in which **Mahaney** sought no cost-of-living increases, as well as the \$21 million police contract with the Broward Sheriff's Office.

Burgess Hanson, the city's director of information systems, will serve as interim city manager.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
December 21, 2009

IRS CHALLENGES DEERFIELD BEACH

Author/Byline: Linda Trischitta; Posted by Admin

A preliminary report by the Internal Revenue Service says that the city did not correctly classify 42 of its 2500 contractors in 2007, and argues that some vendors -- including the city's tennis pro, referees; attorney and his four staffers -- are really employees.

Staff Writer reports:

The audit began in February 2009 and continues in January, when the city meets again with IRS examiners. "The city is not in agreement with the IRS's determination on all 42 vendors," City Manager **Michael Mahaney** said. An IRS spokesman declined to comment.

The IRS report says that "it is becoming increasingly common for governments to contract out some traditional governmental functions" and "that practice" creates ambiguous situations and hybrid entities difficult to classify.

City Attorney Andrew Maurodis's contract restricts his business dealings and requires his office to be in city hall, the audit found. The IRS also found he is a public officer as defined by the city's charter and is supervised by the commission and city manager. If he is an employee, the IRS argued, his wages should have been subject to federal income tax withholding. From his \$628,000 contract that year, Maurodis's office space and some of the utilities were provided by the city. Maurodis funded the salaries for two lawyers, two support staff and a part-time special projects attorney. He paid for retirement costs for the group, and the city reimbursed him \$45,000 of those expenses. He also paid for all office equipment and supplies his team used. Maurodis has other clients outside of Deerfield Beach: the City of Parkland and the Broward County Planning Council.

The city must wait until after the audit is complete to find out if the government will demand penalties for incorrect filing of consultant's tax forms or back taxes.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
June 26, 2009

FOR SOME ON DEERFIELD COMMISSION, IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

Author/Byline: Linda Trischitta; Posted by Anthony Man

Just ask Keith Chadwell and Richard Sala: as the recently departed city managers from Pompano Beach and North Lauderdale know, the gig can be short-term and high stress. So when former Deerfield Beach city commissioner Peggy Noland, mayor for just three months, added an unpublished addendum agenda to Tuesday night's meeting for a "Discussion of performance Evaluation for the City Manager" **Michael Mahaney**, a collective "Uh oh" was heard around town.

Rumors flew about **Mahaney's** possible replacement, including Fire Chief Tony Stravino, who manages 174 employees and a \$20.5 million budget. The city has 800 employees and a \$140 million spending plan. Stravino, a relative by marriage to late commissioner Amadeo "Trinchi" Trinchitella, completes 32 years with the city this year. Noland's husband and son are both city firefighters. We won't know whether Stravino was truly Noland's choice for the city manager job because **Mahaney** survived the performance evaluation discussion, at least until the next commission session on Aug. 4. His contract calls for an annual review but no formal performance review date was set.

Among the commissioners' complaints? That after 26 months on the job, **Mahaney's** overworked, needs a deputy, is "too efficient" and is too plugged in to residents. And that despite budget constraints from property tax revenue shortfalls, he should fill empty management positions for risk, human resources and the CRA. **Mahaney** has created committees from the legal, personnel and risk departments to save on hiring professional managers that he said in a city memo says saves \$275,000. The city has 50 applications for the CRA job.

"There was a time when we ran cities without Blackberrys," said Commissioner Joseph Miller during the meeting. Miller otherwise supported **Mahaney**, saying, "I've enjoyed working with **Mike**. His strength is in working with numbers and with 90 less employees [lost to attrition]. I trust his expertise in budgetary matters. He looks out for the commission and I'm happy with his performance." Noland disagreed. "You've got to pay attention to people and not your BlackBerry," Noland said to **Mahaney**. "it'll be like with my kids -- I'll just take it away from you." She added later, "God forbid something happened to **Mike**? I seriously believe **Mike** has too much on his plate by being too efficient." Said Vice Mayor Sylvia Poitier of **Mahaney's** hand-held device, "He gets right back to his constituents." She said it would be fair for the three new commissioners to work with **Mahaney** for a year before doing a review.

Noland still had complaints. "You're parking in a visitor spot," Noland said to **Mahaney**. "He told me I don't have the right to tell him where to park," she told her dais mates. "That's my pet peeve. I kindly ask you not to do that, and you tell me I don't have the right to, and that bothers

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

me.? **Mahaney** said taking a spot close to the city hall rear entrance, when he is in and out of the building a dozen times a day and loaded down with planning binders, was not something that would change, though he offered to park beyond the first row of spaces. ?It?s not an efficient use of my time [to park further away],? **Mahaney** said. ?I?m not trying to be difficult.?

Noland also challenged him by asking, ?Do you know my goals or objectives for the city?? **Mahaney** has spent hours one-on-one with the new commissioners and said, ?I?m astounded by the question.? ?The pier, the Dixie flyover, other problems coming to us, we all need to be discussing,? said Noland, who wants a retreat for the commission that would be open to the public. ?I feel that?s where you?re lacking. I?m not trying to stab you in the back.? **Mahaney** asked commissioners to tell him good dates for him to book an offsite location. ?I don?t want to see this commission turn into a non-action commission like we had before,? Noland said, prompting groans from residents and former Commissioner Pam Militello in the commission chamber.

Like Miller, Commissioner Marty Popelsky praised **Mahaney**?s way with city finances. ?He?s knowledgeable, understands budgets and has a good, solid method of doing things,? Popelsky said. He added, ?I discussed COLA and merit reviews and he did not necessarily go along with it?I say I don?t want to micromanage, and I probably do.? Popelsky wants to see more ?efficiencies? around city hall and complained about the proposed fire fee increase he cast a yeah vote for last week. He wants to see three new firehouses built instead of one that may be erected with \$1 million from the city and if won, with a federal grant. He said he didn?t want to see **Mahaney** fired but didn?t want to award a raise, either. ?He?s responsible for 800 people,? Popelsky said. ?If I can?t say he?s responsible for that, I?ll be the first to make a motion to remove him.?

Mahaney earns \$180,000. His last raise was in April 2008 and citing the economy has declined to put in for an increase this year. He inherited the hangover of predecessor Larry Deetjen?s polarizing leadership and an often combative commission that saw the arrests last December of two members, former Mayor Al Capellini and Commissioner Steve Gonot, both facing trials on unrelated corruption charges. The city has seen an expansion of its water plant and widening of its beach during **Mahaney**?s reign. Like other city managers in Broward County, **Mahaney** has had to cope with hundreds of foreclosed homes and eyesore properties; departure of 10 percent of staff; loss of millions of property tax revenues and rising public safety, pension and healthcare costs.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel
August 6, 2008

5-CENT TAX CUT RECOMMENDED

By Linda Trischitta

City Manager **Michael Mahaney** is recommending a 5-cent tax decrease this year. He is planning no layoffs and has been able to build a \$1 million contingency fund, in part by losing 80 city staff positions through attrition while making no new hires. "The state tax reforms cost us \$2 million," **Mahaney** said, "and we had 593 single-family homes in some state of foreclosure in the first half of 2008. There were just 81 homes with that status in the 2007-2008 budget year," he said. In response to residents' complaints about the condition of foreclosed and abandoned properties, the city manager is also setting aside \$100,000 for code enforcement to mow lawns and disinfect pools. If the budget is approved, **Mahaney** said he expects to be able to honor all contractual commitments with the city's unions that include the public works and public safety employees, and he said the city's biggest festivals - Founder's Day, July Fourth and the Mango Festival - are funded in next year's budget.

Total proposed budget 2008-09: \$139 million

Total budget 2007-08: \$130 million

Percent change: 6.7 percent increase

Dollar change in property tax revenues: \$3 million decrease

Percentage change in property tax revenues: 8.1 percent decrease

Total tax rate proposed 2008-2009: 5.30

Tax rate 2007-08: 5.35

Impact on homesteaded house valued at \$275,000 (whose taxable value has increased 3 percent because of the Save Our Homes tax cap but now has a \$50,000 homestead exemption): \$1,192.50, or \$102.15 less than last year.

Impact on nonhomesteaded house valued at \$275,000: \$1,457.50 or \$13.75 less than last year.

What is being cut: 80 positions have been frozen as vacancies have occurred. Vacancies continue to be evaluated for possible work-force reduction.

What else changes: No fee increases are proposed.

What's next: Public hearings on the budget take place at 7 p.m. Sept. 8 and Sept. 16 at City Hall.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
July 5, 2008

**SHERIFF'S OFFICE LOOKING AT OT PAID IN DEERFIELD - TWO CITY
WORKERS HAVE RESIGNED; ONE REPAID \$2,613**

Author/Byline: Linda Trischitta; Barbara Hijek contributed to this report.

At the request of the city, the Broward Sheriff's Office is investigating payroll expenditures in the building department. A division manager and his secretary both resigned after city staffers said she received \$5,780 in questionable overtime pay. "I don't have any comment," said the secretary, Peggy Moore, reached at home.

Moore, 60, resigned June 30 from her \$50,218-a-year job after a review by city staff found 32 instances of overtime paid for hours when her security card had not been swiped in the locks at City Hall. She was not logged on to her computer during the times since December 2006 she claimed to have worked for the extra pay, City Manager **Michael Mahaney** said. "It's in the city's best interest that there be a review," **Mahaney** said of the investigation by the Sheriff's Office.

Moore reported to James Sennello, 67, who supervised more than two dozen employees in the Building and Inspection Services Division. Sennello, who earned \$96,082, began working for the city in 1995 and resigned June 27 because of health problems, according to his resignation paperwork. Sennello did not return a message left at this home. On June 26, Moore and Sennello were confronted by **Mahaney**, Director of Planning Jerry Ferguson and human resources officials. According to a city memo, Moore said she did not know how to provide evidence that she was in the building on the dates in question. Sennello said Moore may have entered City Hall through a side door, but was told those doors were sealed prior to the overtime claims. He later told officials he was not aware of Moore's overtime, though he signed her timesheets and payroll documents, the memo said. On June 30, the day she resigned, Moore signed an agreement that allowed her to reimburse the city without admitting guilt. She repaid the city \$2,613 after it was calculated she was owed \$3,167 in regular pay and unused vacation time. According to Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Alesia Russell, in general, a theft of more than \$5,000 is a third-degree felony with a possible three-year prison term.

Sennello was charged in 1985 with extortion, according to David Bogenschutz, Sennello's attorney at the time, and he pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor charge of attempted extortion. He received one year of probation. Former City Manager Larry Deetjen hired Sennello 10 years after the sentence. "My memory of Jim is that he was an excellent building official and did an excellent job for us and we had nothing but positive comments for his work," Deetjen said Wednesday. He said Sennello was "open and up front" about the extortion charge when he was hired. "We deliberated quite thoroughly on it before giving him the job and interviewed outside candidates," Deetjen said. "None were as impressive as Jim."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel
October 1, 2007

DEERFIELD TO START NEXT MEETING WITH NONSECTARIAN PRAYER

By Hemmy So

Jesus Christ has left City Hall, at least in name. The City Commission meeting Tuesday won't feature a religious prayer, as it has for years. Instead, the invocation will be a neutral prayer, probably delivered by the mayor. The commission last month decided to forgo the nonsecular invocation, a task rotated among different members of local clergy, most of them Christian. "I was very happy to see that there were people on the dais that were willing to find the right solution," said Century Village resident Caryl Berner, who has protested the religious invocation for years. "Be religious in your house of worship. This is not a place for religion. This is a civic place and I just wanted to hear a civic something."

Berner, who is Jewish, said she first objected to the tradition of local ministers giving prayers at commission meetings about four years ago. In May 2004, she publicly objected to local clergy praying to Jesus for the invocation. Eight months later, she invited three others to protest and requested a neutral invocation. But commissioners declined to take up the matter. And they regularly refused to deal with the issue despite Berner's intermittent requests, until the commission's Sept. 18 meeting, when the substitute teacher and community activist again approached the dais with her neutral prayer request.

City Manager **Mike Mahaney** had already circulated a suggested nonsectarian prayer to the commission, after members informed him of the debate surrounding the invocation - one that evoked the specter of a lawsuit. That's the prayer likely to be used at Tuesday's meeting. The decision to stop religious invocations troubled some residents, however, who felt the previous system allowed for a variety of religious voices. "The way [City Clerk Ada Graham-Johnson] did it, she called upon different members of the clergy. It wasn't like it was a slanted type of thing," resident Ginger Alvarez said. "There were different members of different perspectives that were up here and I didn't feel there was any problem with it."

Religion has been a sticky issue for Deerfield Beach. The elected officials also had drawn criticism for holding a public hearing to increase the city's fire assessment fee just hours before the start of Rosh Hashana at sundown on Sept. 12. "Why was it necessary to hold your meeting of such importance knowing it was the holiest night of the Jewish religion, Rosh Hashana?" Century Village resident Jack Malin asked the commission. "I'm sure there would have been many other city residents attending the meeting were it held on another day more conducive." Someone had placed Jewish calendars at each commissioner's place on the dais before the Sept. 18 meeting as a not-so-gentle reminder to schedule meetings around important holidays. Mayor Al Capellini took responsibility for the scheduling and said he would make sure to work around religious holidays for future public meetings.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun Sentinel
August 6, 2007

**\$1,000 PIER WEDDING FEE INCLUDED IN BUDGET PLAN - DEERFIELD MAY
RAISE OTHER FEES TO FILL SHORTFALL**

By Hemmy So

Happy couples can thank property tax changes for the chance to host their nuptials at the Deerfield Beach International Pier. To help make up the \$1.6 million reduction in property tax revenue mandated by recent state legislation, city officials have ratcheted up various fees - including charging \$1,000 for pier weddings. The parks and recreation department would be allowing them for the first time in several years, City Manager **Mike Mahaney** said Sunday.

Mahaney presented the proposed \$130.4 million budget to the city commission Wednesday. Commissioners preliminarily approved a 5.35 tax rate, a state-mandated decrease from the previous rate of 6.25. They plan to meet Aug. 13 for a budget workshop to discuss the city manager's recommendations. The City Commission also tentatively approved an increased fire assessment fee, which would fill much of the revenue shortfall. The fee helps cover fire department costs and, like the tax rate, must gain final approval after a public hearing.

The change would raise the fee from \$64, one of the lowest in Broward County, to a maximum of \$99. If the commissioners approve the maximum \$35 increase, the city would gain an estimated \$2.5 million in revenue, **Mahaney** said. Other cities, including Margate, Coral Springs and Miramar, also are considering increasing their fire assessment fees. The proposed budget also boosts fees for parks and recreation programs such as woodcarving classes or youth day camps - prices untouched for 17 years. To cut costs, **Mahaney** introduced several measures that avoided employee layoffs. Still, under his recommendation, the city's payroll would shrink by at least 36 vacant positions. "Everybody who has a job will still have a job, and we will continue to downsize through attrition," he said.

Residents may feel the budget squeeze strongest at the city's annual festivals. Deerfield Beach takes pride in its elaborate special events, which include signature celebrations such as Founder's Day, Mango Festival and the Fourth of July. The 78 different special events cost the city almost \$700,000 last year. The proposed budget slashes the Mango Festival and Founder's Day event budgets in half and reduces the Fourth of July celebration's budget by almost 30 percent. But **Mahaney** assured commissioners they could draw from the proposed \$1.4 million contingency fund if they wanted to provide more funding for those events or anything else. "This budget is designed for maximum flexibility," he said. Residents won't directly feel the effects of many of the recommendations. For example, insurance companies would bear the cost of proposed higher ambulance transport fees. **Mahaney** also suggested saving money by setting up a trust fund to pay for city employee health insurance claims topping \$100,000 rather than paying an expensive insurance premium for that supplemental coverage.

INFORMATIONAL BOX:

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Deerfield Beach's proposed budget
Total budget proposed this year: \$130.4 million
Budget last year: \$124.6 million
Percent change: 4.5 percent decrease
Property tax cut: \$1.6 million
Percent change in tax collections: 4.2 percent decrease
Total tax rate proposed this year: 5.35
Tax rate last year: 6.25

Impact on homesteaded house valued at \$275,000 last year (whose taxable value has increased 3 percent): \$1,381.64 tax bill, a \$150.86 reduction in the city portion of taxes.

Impact on non-homesteaded house valued at \$275,000 last year (whose taxable value increased the average 11.6 percent): \$1,641.92 tax bill, a \$76.83 reduction in the city portion of taxes
What is being cut: 36 vacant positions, including 20 from parks and recreation, seven from the fire department, seven from the Broward Sheriff's Office, an assistant city manager and executive assistant. Only three major special events, Founder's Day, Mango Festival and Fourth of July, would receive automatic city funding and that spending has been reduced by almost 50 percent.

What else changes: The \$64 fire assessment fee will increase to \$99. The solid waste fee increases by 4 percent effective Jan. 1, or less than \$1 per month for a single-family homeowner. Parks and recreation fees increase by varying amounts, depending on the program.
What's next: A public hearing on the fire assessment fee is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Sept. 12 at City Hall, 150 NE Second Ave.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

South Florida Sun Sentinel
May 17, 2007

Manager won't run from task at hand: Deerfield's top man a strong personality

By Hemmy So

Every morning, **Michael Mahaney** runs. He will not tell you where or when, ever since the death threat. That eerie phone call came years ago from a resident angry at a road crew, but it taught **Mahaney** that the city manager's job embraces more than budgets and public works projects. It requires dealing with emotion. Perhaps fitting then, that in a city still carrying its own emotional baggage from the controversial departure of its former top administrator, the task of healing those wounds may fall upon **Mahaney**, a whirlwind of drive and dedication as Deerfield Beach's new city manager. "The stuff that happened in the past, I see that as water over the dam," **Mahaney** said with a Southern drawl. "I hope [people] give me a chance."

The City Commission hired **Mahaney** on April 10, and he started work two days later. **Mahaney** came from Nassau County in North Florida, where he worked for 21½ years as county administrator until he was fired in February because of what he calls a shift in political winds. He earns \$160,000 a year as Deerfield Beach city manager. City commissioners acknowledge that bringing harmony to elected officials, residents and city workers was an unadvertised part of the Deerfield Beach job. Commissioner Steve Gonot, a key player in the ouster of former City Manager Larry Deetjen, is optimistic. Toward the end of Deetjen's 12-year tenure, Deetjen and commissioners often fought viciously over issues, including beach development. "Groups that haven't ever agreed, agreed on his hiring," Gonot said of **Mahaney**.

Mahaney, 57, is a tall, lean athlete who takes vitamins and abstains from tobacco and alcohol. He's an avid runner with a passion for pasta. To his wife's horror, he will eat spaghetti without sauce. "Part of why I run is because of these," he said, grasping invisible love handles. He wants people to feel comfortable with him. He wears a Deerfield Beach lapel pin. He smiles a lot and shoots employees a double thumbs-up. Those who have worked with **Mahaney** mention his strong and outgoing personality. In St. Mary's, Ga., a riverfront town of about 25,000 where he worked 11 years as top administrator before working in Nassau County, **Mahaney** used to rent an Uncle Sam costume each year for the Fourth of July parade, said Jerry Brandon, the city's former mayor. "He was very outspoken," Brandon said. "Sometimes that kind of rubbed people the wrong way, but that's the way he is." **Mahaney** was born in Clifton Forge, Va., a small town in the Blue Ridge Mountains, near Roanoke. He attended Virginia Tech University, where he earned a civil engineering degree. There he met a graduate student named Trish, who became his wife after seven weeks. They have been married almost 33 years.

In contrast to her gregarious and somewhat hyperactive husband, Trish **Mahaney** is reserved, and in her words, "prissy." She is a licensed clinical social worker who specializes in working with children. They have one adult son from Trish's previous marriage. Her first husband, an Air Force pilot, was shot down in the Vietnam War and presumed dead. While **Michael Mahaney** and his wife may not share similar temperaments, they do share a strong Christian faith. Trish

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

taught Sunday school at their Methodist church in Nassau County, and Michael prays aloud before meals. Several Deerfield Beach residents approached **Mahaney** at his first commission meeting on April 17. Some just said hello, but others aired grievances. **Mahaney** listened patiently and immediately delegated issues to the appropriate department head -- which reflects his inclination to avoid micromanaging. "[He] gives them the opportunity to do their jobs," said Floyd Vanzant, former Nassau County commissioner. So far, so good, say city officials. Outside his office one day, **Mahaney** described his work pace: "Mach-10, with my hair on fire."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
February 10, 2007

Commission fires administrator Recent turmoil over Mahaney's actions ends with handshakes.

By Kevin Turner & Mary Hurst

Nassau County commissioners fired County Administrator **Mike Mahaney** on Thursday, ending almost two months of wrangling about the embattled administrator. **Mahaney's** dismissal was immediate. **Mahaney** shook commissioners' hands after the vote and left without comment. He turned in his county keys, badge and cell phone shortly after. "I tried to take the high road, wishing them the best and dealing with it professionally," **Mahaney** said Thursday. The firing came during a meeting scheduled for commissioners to find out whether **Mahaney** wanted to negotiate a resignation settlement or face for cause termination hearings. But after negotiations stalled Thursday, commissioners opted to fire him without cause. Commissioner Jim B. Higginbotham, who last week said he didn't think it would be fair to fire **Mahaney** without a formal review, joined Commissioners Mike Boyle, Barry Holloway and Marianne Marshall in voting to fire him. Commissioner Tom Branan was absent.

Marshall, Boyle and Holloway had voted to fire **Mahaney** without cause Jan. 30, but Higginbotham voted no, leaving the motion one vote shy of the four needed. Under the disputed terms of **Mahaney's** contract, four of the five commissioners were required to dismiss him. On Thursday, Higginbotham provided the fourth vote. Higginbotham said he changed his mind after negotiations Thursday over **Mahaney's** conditions for a resignation settlement seemed likely to drag on for several months. "We couldn't get anywhere. I talked to him before and asked him 'What do you want?' He'd always say 'I need more time,'" Higginbotham said. "The county can't continue with this turmoil. There are department heads who don't know what to do."

Marshall, who on Dec. 13 became the first commissioner to say **Mahaney** should be fired, said Thursday she wished him well. "This'll save the taxpayers money in the long run," she said. Marshall charged Jan. 22 that **Mahaney** should be fired for cause for his handling of financial issues at the West Nassau Landfill, the botched paving of County Road 121; alleged Sunshine Law violations involving **Mahaney's** "polling" of commissioners; and wetland mitigation work at the Nassau County Judicial Annex. Boyle said Thursday he had a sense of relief the turmoil over **Mahaney** that has dominated commission deliberations was over. "It's best for him and the citizens of the county," Boyle said. "This will allow him to get on with his career, and it allows us to start addressing a number of issues that have had to take a back seat." Since **Mahaney** was fired without cause, he will receive the severance package outlined in his contract, which includes six months of his \$135,000 annual salary, his accrued leave time and retirement account. Commissioners also voted Thursday to say nothing negative about **Mahaney** if asked for comment for a reference.

Commissioners instructed the Human Resources Department Thursday to advertise for **Mahaney's** replacement and to contact Larry Myers, who served as the county's interim

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administrator from January to September 2004, when **Mahaney** started. Myers stepped into the temporary post 10 months after former County Coordinator Walt Gossett resigned in March 2003. Outgoing County Attorney Mike Mullin said Thursday he will recommend commissioners drop a motion on Monday that was filed the same day asking for a judge to rule on the validity of **Mahaney's** contract. On Jan. 23, commissioners voted to ask a judge for a declaratory judgement over a clause inserted in **Mahaney's** contract in 2005 following a vote to increase his salary and require a super-majority of commissioners to fire him. The clause, however, requires any change to the contract, not just **Mahaney's** firing, to be approved by **Mahaney** and a super-majority vote. Mullin has labeled the paragraph a "mistake."

Nassau Neighbors Editor Amelia A. Hart contributed to this story.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
December 23, 2006

Credit rating firm upgrades Nassau County officials say enacting some of Standard & Poor's suggestions is working.

Author/Byline: KEVIN TURNER

Standard & Poor's has given Nassau County an early Christmas present, upgrading its rating of the county's financial outlook from negative to stable. Nassau County Administrative Services Director Ted Selby said he got the news Dec. 19 from Standard & Poor's, a leading credit-rating agency, that it no longer saw the county's financial future as blighted. Additionally, Selby said, Standard & Poor has graded the county's financial stability as good.

Standard & Poor's Director of Public Finances Robin Prunty said the county's current direction is a far cry from what it was two years ago. "We listed them with a negative outlook in 2004 due to the financial deterioration," Prunty said Wednesday. "We have moved that outlook back to stable. This is from the county's progress in boosting its reserves, balancing its budget and amending debt-management policies. We thought those things were positive, considering their history." Prunty said the County Commission's vote to approve a codified financial policy helped the county's financial cause. Selby said county staff assembled the ordinance with input from a citizens' group assembled by Clerk of the Courts John Crawford. "There are only a couple of items they suggested that did not get included," Selby said.

Standard & Poor's news came two weeks after representatives from County Administrator **Mike Mahaney's** and Crawford's offices updated the agency on the county's financial condition. "I'm pleased," **Mahaney** said Wednesday.

Mahaney, who started in 2004 shortly before Standard & Poor's downgraded its assessment of Nassau County's financial outlook, said he's worked on improving it since. "This shows we're making progress. We've concentrated on increasing reserve levels, adopting good fiscal and budgetary policies and identifying capital needs and potential funding sources. I'm concentrating on improving our standards," **Mahaney** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
September 2, 2006

Sunshine violations deemed mistakes No action will be taken against county officials, who didn't know any better.

Author/Byline: MARY HURST

The State Attorney's Office of Special Prosecution said Wednesday it will take no action following a Florida Department of Law Enforcement preliminary inquiry into accusations that Nassau officials violated Florida's Sunshine Law. "While it certainly appears that there may have been technical violations of Florida's Chapter 286 Public Meeting Laws, there is no indication of any sinister intent, personal profit or other illicit gains by any of the alleged participants. It appears, in fact, that the alleged violations were the product of ignorance and not motivated by any criminal intent, or any intent to cheat the public of its right to participate in the governmental decision-making process," Jay Taylor, director of the state attorney's special prosecution division, said in an Aug. 22 memorandum released Wednesday. The memorandum, however, said Taylor's office felt it was appropriate "to remind public officials of their duty to follow the laws of this state and to be mindful of their obligations to the public under Florida's Sunshine Laws."

Nassau County Administrator **Mike Mahaney**, one of the targets of the investigation, said Wednesday that he'd learned a lesson. **Mahaney** has spent less than two years in Florida and said he was not familiar with the finer points of the Sunshine Laws. "I'm learning the law and trying to take particular care not to violate them," he said.

The investigation was spurred by an unsigned letter from Nassau Citizens for Accountability in Government hand-delivered April 26 by county resident Don Neal to Nassau County Sheriff Tommy Seagraves. Neal could not be reached for comment Wednesday. FDLE spokesman Tom Beringer said investigators could not determine with sufficient certainty who was involved with the citizens group to name them in the investigative findings report. The letter outlined allegations of Sunshine Law violations by Nassau County commissioners, **Mahaney** and Nassau County Attorney Mike Mullin. The complaint alleged that **Mahaney** "brokered communications" between commissioners to affect how the commissioners would vote on certain issues; that county commissioners, **Mahaney** and Mullin regularly ate together following meetings, giving them an opportunity to discuss county business "out of the Sunshine"; that a proposed \$10,000 raise for **Mahaney** that eventually became a \$20,000 raise was executed with little or no debate; and that **Mahaney** brokered communication between the commissioners regarding a 5-cent gas tax imposed in January and that this communication contributed to an abuse of power which denied voters a say in the matter.

The investigative findings report said no facts were found to corroborate the allegations in the letter.

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
February 7, 2006

Group alleged Mahaney violations Two who went to the meeting are now trying to fire him. administrator.

By Kevin Turner

The voluminous binder of information County Commissioner Marianne Marshall presented Jan. 22 to support the firing of County Administrator **Mike Mahaney**, contained a page from a September Florida Department of Law Enforcement report identifying the members of Nassau Citizens for Accountability in Government as responsible for an anonymous April letter alleging **Mahaney** violated Florida's Sunshine Law. Two of the attendees of the group's meeting last April are now county commissioners working to fire **Mahaney**. A third was asked to work behind the scenes to negotiate the embattled county administrator's resignation. Another member of the group and the facilitator of the meeting hand-delivered the letter to Nassau County Sheriff Tommy Seagraves, but wouldn't disclose who wrote it. And although the FDLE document didn't list Clerk of Courts John Crawford as attending, Crawford said Friday he was there, helping make a presentation on the pros and cons of charter government, the issue that brought the group together.

CHARTER WAS THE TOPIC

Those contacted for comment Thursday and Friday said the April meeting in Amelia Island property manager Don Neal's conference room was called to discuss charter government in Nassau County. Then-candidates for the commission, Barry Holloway and Mike Boyle, attended, and Jerry Greeson, Crawford's deputy, assisted Crawford with a presentation on charter government. Melvin Usery who chaired the meeting, and Bob Spaeth, who later tried to negotiate **Mahaney's** resignation, also attended, along with four others. Spaeth, Usery, Neal and Boyle all agreed those gathered in the conference room were unanimously opposed to charter government, which they said would remove responsibility for financial duties from Crawford and hand them to the County Commission and its county administrator. "I think that they thought correctly," Crawford said Friday.

MAHANNEY DISCUSSED

Some attendees recall discussing **Mahaney** as an outgrowth of the discussion about charter government. Spaeth said the group talked about the Oct. 12, 2005, vote for **Mahaney's** \$20,000, raise and the insertion of a clause in his contract requiring four commissioners to vote to fire him. "How that [the supermajority] could have gone through with no time to analyze it makes the pay raise pale in comparison," Spaeth said. Usery said the group was determined that something should be done about what they saw as Sunshine Law violations.

"The concerns were, there were conversations taking place not in the public view," Usery said. "It looked like it was an educational forum, but the group decided that strong action should be taken. These are good people. These are businesspeople. They felt something was going on that was improper." Crawford said he didn't think the group discussed allegations of **Mahaney's**

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Sunshine Law violations at the meeting. "I didn't discuss Sunshine violations, and I don't think they did," he said. "I was there prepared to talk about charter government, and I talked. I wasn't part of that letter thing." Boyle said Friday he couldn't remember if **Mahaney** was the topic of discussion during the meeting. "I went there because I was interested in charter government," Boyle said. "I have very little recollection of the **Mahaney** issue. If we had a charter government, it would focus too much power on the position of county administrator."

CHECKS AND BALANCES

Charter governments, now in place in 19 of Florida's 67 counties, are created when the voters of a county approve a charter specifying a form of county government rather than using the structure outlined in the Florida Constitution. The chosen structure can take a myriad of forms. But attendees in April largely assumed it would mean stripping the clerk of courts of his financial responsibilities. "I think at the time, it looked like it was going to be a power grab," Boyle said. "It consolidates the power to one individual: the county administrator. I'm a firm believer in the constitutional form of government we have in Nassau County." Spaeth said he's opposed to a charter government because of the potential for loss of accountability. "I remember talking about the loss of checks and balances in charter government," Spaeth said. "You lose your chief financial officer. He becomes appointed."

Neal said charter government was a hot issue at the time because County Commissioner Jim B. Higginbotham had expressed support for it during commission meetings several times. "I think **Mahaney** was pushing charter government as well, because he wanted to be in charge," Neal said. "If charter government would be in place, then the county administrator would have full run over local county government." **Mahaney** said Friday he has never weighed into that debate. "That is absolutely untrue," he said. "I have never taken a position one way or the other. I stay out of that because I have to work very closely with the constitutional officers. This is a board decision." Boyle said that the April push for charter government likely came because Crawford was doing his job as chief financial officer. "I was concerned that there was an underground move to remove the responsibility from the clerk," he said. "I think it was because the clerk of courts was watching [the commission's] spending habits too closely, which I think is his constitutional role. I think they were getting ready to take that away from him."

LETTER CAME LATER

In the days that followed, Neal handed Seagraves the letter alleging **Mahaney** "brokered communications" between commissioners to affect how the commissioners would vote on certain issues; that county commissioners and **Mahaney** ate together following meetings; that a proposed \$10,000 raise for **Mahaney** that eventually became a \$20,000 raise was executed with little or no debate; and that **Mahaney** brokered communication between the commissioners regarding a 5-cent gas tax imposed in January 2006. Seagraves gave the letter to Gov. Jeb Bush, who sent it to the FDLE for investigation. In the September report, investigators said while there may have been technical violations of the Sunshine Law, there was no indication that anyone intended to circumvent it.

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Neal, Seagraves' manager from his 2004 campaign for office, said the letter was in a sealed envelope and that he did not read it. Neal said Seagraves told him an anonymous letter is acceptable as a form of complaint that laws have been broken. Neal refused Thursday to say who gave him the letter and wasn't sure if it was specifically discussed at the meeting. "I don't remember someone saying, 'Let's write a letter,' " Neal said. "The letter was presented to me, and they said, 'Please pass this on to the sheriff.' The letter came up after the meeting. I did hand it to the sheriff." Boyle said when the letter charging **Mahaney's** Sunshine violations emerged, it surprised him. Neal said both Boyle and Holloway distanced themselves when the topic turned to **Mahaney**. "Both were saying 'This is veering off in a way and, as candidates, we should excuse ourselves,' " he said.

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Michael Mahaney
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The Florida Times-Union
September 20, 2006

Residential landfill fees go up \$35 on Oct. 1 Nassau County commissioners defeat proposed commercial rate increases.

By Kevin Turner

Nassau County commissioners axed a proposed commercial landfill assessment Friday and raised the residential landfill fee from \$65 to \$100, slightly less than the \$116.26 that had been originally proposed. On the way to that resolution, the public hearing, which had been expected to be a debate on the effects of higher taxes on county residents and business owners, turned into a public display of a gulf between County Administrator **Mike Mahaney's** financial staff and Clerk of the Courts John Crawford's, a display that left commissioners caught in the middle and many observers in the audience scratching their heads. The proposed commercial assessment, which would have required some Nassau County businesses to pay hundreds of dollars while others paid tens of thousands of dollars to use the county's landfill, had been met with a storm of protest by business owners.

The \$100 residential landfill assessment equals the 1993 fee adopted when Nassau County took out a \$23.8 million bond to open the West County Landfill in Callahan and close three others. The assessment was dropped to \$45 a year when the county began to accept waste from outside the county at reduced rates. It has since risen to \$65 a year. The county had proposed the residential fee hike and imposing the new commercial assessment, which would have replaced the current per-ton dumping fee charged to businesses, to raise \$5.5 million for the landfill.

The \$5.5 million in new revenue will cover a variety of expenses, chiefly the \$3.1 million in revenue the landfill will lose this fiscal year once it stops taking trash from Clay County at the end of this month. The county opted to stop taking outside trash last year in order to extend the life of the landfill, which was filling up faster than the county could pay off the bond debt. Commissioners, however, were able to dump the commercial assessment Friday and reduce the residential hike after **Mahaney** and his financial staff found other funding sources. Those sources outlined by **Mahaney** included allocating \$5 million in 1-cent sales tax revenue for landfill operations instead of the \$3.45 million originally proposed. Because the landfill is now expected to last until 2019, **Mahaney** said he trimmed another \$1 million from the amount that was going to be put aside this year toward closing the landfill in the next decade.

County officials also hope to collect another \$450,000 by convincing private haulers to sign contracts guaranteeing them a \$30-per-ton dumping fee if they bring all Nassau County waste to the county's landfill. The gate dumping fee is \$85.75 a ton. But Crawford stole **Mahaney's** thunder. Crawford's Finance Department staff had been working on a different equation than **Mahaney's**: Paying the entire \$12.9 million landfill debt. Crawford would commit the year's entire Solid Waste Department fund, including money to operate the landfill and savings toward the multi-million cost to close the landfill and maintain the closed landfill. He also would spend another \$1.5 million in 1-cent tax revenue of \$6.5 million in the county's 1-cent revenues. The

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rest of the money would come from the proposed contracts with Nassau County trash haulers. In a "landfill debt retirement summary" Crawford gave commissioners, the landfill's proposed payoff left \$352,000 to operate the landfill and would yield \$3.3 million in interest saved between 2006 and 2013. "We believe the commercial assessment should be denied," Crawford said. "We do not think the residential assessment should be increased; we believe it should be taken away. We can debate these figures, but that would be a mistake." **Mahaney** and his staff, however, said they had major disagreements with Crawford's take on the landfill numbers. "We are not in agreement that all of these funds that are listed are available," Director of Administrative Services Ted Selby said. "That leaves us zero in the [solid waste] fund. We feel that's very risky."

Commissioner Marianne Marshall, who asked commissioners to hear Crawford's presentation before making any decisions, urged them to follow his advice. "I really believe we need to follow the clerk's recommendation. Pay this thing off! Get rid of it," she said. Before the hearing was opened for public input, commissioners hashed out an agreement to go with **Mahaney's** recommendation, providing **Mahaney's** and Crawford's staff would meet within 60 days to consider ways to eliminate the landfill's debt. They later voted 5-0 on the proposal. That agreement prompted some audience members to pass on speaking and others to simply go home. Some who did speak supported increasing the residential assessment if it meant the landfill debt would be paid off later. Ray Roberts of Fernandina Beach spoke in favor of settling the landfill's debt, but said it had to be done responsibly. "It appears someone is playing a shell game with the money," Roberts said. "If we are wrapped up in exuberance and we agree to pay off the debt without the \$100 fee, we could get in trouble if the [financial estimates] are wrong."

Some speakers said they weren't so happy that the proposed 78-percent increase only had been reduced to a 54-percent increase. "I'm against the \$100 they want to put on people," Roland Vanzant of Callahan said. "There's a lot of people struggling on fixed incomes." "I can't hardly [pay] any more, \$40 more is kind of rough," Javan Thompson of Kings Ferry said. "Once you put a price on something, it hardly ever goes back lower." Commissioners noted the landfill assessment ordinance includes a hardship clause. County residents who cannot pay their landfill assessment may contact Nassau County staff and request a waiver or reduction, they noted.

Commissioners raise dumping fee

Commissioners voted Friday to increase the landfill dumping fee from \$50 to \$85.75 and the multifamily annual assessment from \$65 to \$70. The new assessments take effect Oct. 1 and will be mailed out on property-tax bills.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
August 30, 2006

New gas levy just a portion of total taxes The 5-cent tax is earmarked exclusively for maintaining the county's roads.

By Kevin Turner

In an age of rising fuel prices, the 5-cent gas tax Nassau County imposed this year has been a hot topic among county candidates and residents. But what many people don't know is that nickel is only 9.3 percent of the total tax they pay at the pump in Nassau County. The 5-cent tax - dedicated solely to maintaining county roads - is just part of the 53.5 cents per gallon in county, state and federal tax paid at the pump in Nassau County. Nassau County's total per-gallon tax is 12 cents. In addition to the 5-cent road-repair tax, a 1-cent tax goes to pay off more than \$20 million in bonds issued to finance numerous past road projects.

Most of a 6-cent tax also goes toward that debt, but in the 2006-07 budget, \$800,000 has been earmarked for the county's general transportation fund, County Financial Analyst Cathy Lewis said. Florida claims 23.1 cents per gallon; the federal gas tax is 18.4 cents per gallon. Despite the new 5-cent tax and high gas prices, at least one Nassau County gas station manager said business doesn't seem to have been affected. Harold Hahn manages the Flash Foods and Shell gasoline station at Sadler Road and Eighth Street in Fernandina Beach. Business has been steady in the four years he has managed the store. "Business has been about the same," Hahn said. "You've got your average customers who go to Georgia no matter what. But I've seen no decline in sales."

Several people pumping gas Thursday said they're not thrilled about gasoline prices, or the 53.5 cents of tax per gallon. For a vehicle with a 20-gallon tank, \$3 a gallon means it costs \$60 for a fill-up. Of that, \$10.70 is tax. "It's outrageous," said John Thompson, 18, of Hilliard as he pumped gas into his truck at an Amelia Island gas station. "Yeah, it's affected me. Sometimes I pay for my gas, sometimes my dad does. Sometimes I go to Georgia to get it; or Jacksonville, because it's like 13 cents cheaper to get gas down there." Thompson watches gas prices. He said he can get gas at a Georgia station for \$2.70 a gallon, while it's \$2.82 in areas of Jacksonville.

But Thompson said the 5-cent tax to maintain the county's roads is actually a good use of tax money. "If it's going to fix the roads, I don't care," he said. Tom Blackwelder of Fernandina Beach, a passenger in a truck at an Amelia Island gas station, agreed. "It's worth a nickel a gallon, but I don't think we should be paying \$3 a gallon," Blackwelder said. "It doesn't affect me, because I ride a bicycle. But it affects everyone around me. It's bad when you can't afford a car to go to work." Charles Lewis of Sanderson said he was visiting Nassau County, but is planning to move here. As he pumped gas at a Yulee gas station, he said he wasn't optimistic about gasoline taxes in general.

"Look at all the other taxes we pay," he said. "I think it's B.S. It's ridiculous. Every time we turn around, we get more taxes." Lewis said rising gas prices have affected him. "Gas just costs more, and we don't travel as much as we used to," he said. Coming changes in state law mean Nassau

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County had to nail down a specific source of money to maintain its roads, said County Administrator **Mike Mahaney**, who advocated the 5-cent gas tax last year. Florida offers its 67 counties three gas-tax options: a 1-cent tax, an up-to 6-cent tax and an up-to 5-cent tax. Counties can levy all, some or none as they choose, up to 12 cents. Nassau County is one of 16 that impose all three up to 12 cents. By levying the 5-cent tax this year, **Mahaney** said the county is ensuring money is available to keep county roads in repair.

Changes in state law mean the county must have a five-year capital-improvement plan - including big-ticket road projects such as widening, bridge replacement and purchases of rights of way - in place by December 2007, **Mahaney** said. That plan will have to list specific funding sources, and that could mean money the county once used for road repair may no longer be available for that purpose, **Mahaney** said. Improvements to Page's Dairy Road, County Road 107, Chester Road and Blackrock Road to accommodate growth and relieve traffic pressure on Florida A1A will likely be included on that capital-improvement plan, **Mahaney** said.

Using the 5-cent gas tax for road maintenance frees up money for capital road projects critical to the county's future, he said. "If you add up all of those projects, they're in the millions of dollars," **Mahaney** said. "We've got two major sources of funds - we can either raise the transportation tax [a portion of property taxes], or we can implement a suggested \$6,000 transportation impact fee. Those projects aren't going to go away." Even with new impact fees, that would leave little or no money for existing county roads, he said. "What else are we going to use to maintain the existing 400 miles of roads?" **Mahaney** asked.

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
August 23, 2006

Key staff positions could be lost They are key county jobs responsible for monitoring development and growth

By Kevin Turner

The two departments responsible for regulating and inspecting development in Nassau County will be devastated by staff losses by the end of next month. The county's Growth Management department, which handles planning and deals directly with developers to ensure they follow regulations, will be down from four people to one person by Sept. 30 if new personnel aren't hired right away, County Administrator **Mike Mahaney** said Thursday. The Engineering Services department, which handles civil engineering and inspections, will shrink to two employees, one of whom hasn't started yet, he said. The personnel losses include the acting heads of both departments.

Director of Engineering Services José Deliz will leave Sept. 15. County Planner Marshall McCrary left Friday and Development Review Coordinator Chris Jackson will retire Sept. 30, Human Resources Coordinator Patsy Bunch said. The Growth Management Department already had been approved to hire a director, but one was never named, **Mahaney** said. The Engineering Services Department is budgeted for four inspectors, but now has only one due to a resignation in June, he said.

Mahaney said he plans to ask commissioners at their meeting Monday to declare the staffing losses an emergency to expedite hiring a search firm to find a planning director and an engineer. He also expects to ask commissioners to raise the salaries paid to planners and engineers. "In my mind, this is an emergency," **Mahaney** said. "I don't have time to do a [request for proposals]. We've got significant, major issues and we need to move on them. I need people to deal with them."

In addition to the myriad projects for which Growth Management is responsible - the latest Nassau County Development Review status report lists 61 developments in the pipeline - several developers are waiting for the county to issue developer's agreements before they can begin construction, **Mahaney** said. If developers suspect county staffing problems are hindering their projects, they could file suit against the county under the state's Bert Harris Act, **Mahaney** said. The act allows developers to recover losses from any governmental entity a court determines has "inordinately burdened an existing use of real property or a vested right to a specific use of real property." **Mahaney** said Nassau County also needs to convince the state Department of Transportation that traffic "reservations" - credits given developers toward future traffic generated by developments approved, but not yet built - makes finding the money to widen the Florida A1A critically urgent.

"Again, we need engineers to do that," **Mahaney** said. Nassau County also needs to come up with a formula for calculating how much to charge developers who want to build developments

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

that generate more traffic on a road than county standards allow for transportation improvements to offset the impact. Senate Bill 360, a new state law going into effect in December, requires the formula for calculating those fees to be backed by verifiable statistics, County Attorney Michael Mullin said last year. The law also requires a state-approved list of new roads and improvements in the county that would be paid for using the money collected from developers.

If the county doesn't come up with the road improvement plan and the new traffic-impact fee formula by the time the law takes effect, Nassau could lose state funding, Mullin said. Last year, planners asked for a nine-month development moratorium so they could prepare for the law and to protect the county from developer lawsuits, but the commission rejected it, saying they could prepare for the new law while conducting business as usual. But soon, **Mahaney** said, they won't be able to do even that.

Mahaney said a lack of response to recent ads for the Engineering Services director position indicates Nassau County isn't paying its planners and engineers enough. He asked the Human Resources Department to do surveys to find out what the going salaries are. "Engineers and planners are in demand in the private sector. Some are giving signing bonuses, and we're going to have to raise the salaries here," **Mahaney** said. **Mahaney** is considering patching staff holes by hiring some qualified people on a temporary basis. He said retired professionals may be interested in a short-term job. "I've got a couple of names of people from around the state. I've got H.R. trying to contact them to see if they'd come in for a month or two and hit the ground running," he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
March 17, 2006

NASSAU COUNTY On sound financial path

After years of mismanaging its budget, highlighted by an embezzlement that cost the county more than \$1 million, it finally looks like Nassau County is on the right financial path.

Nassau recently earned an AA rating from bond-rating agency Moody's, a positive step for a county that has been trying to introduce basic financial management. "Moody's believes the county's recently narrowed financial position will continue to improve given recent augmentation of diminished reserves, improved cash position, tightened internal controls and formalization of fiscal policies," Moody's said in a report to county officials.

Nassau County operates on a budget of a little over \$124 million a year. The county has just over \$150 million in bond debt, which won't be eliminated until 2033. But reserves have been sorely lacking. Currently, the county has about \$8.6 million in various reserve accounts in various departments. But only \$2.7 million of that is located in the general fund.

County Administrator **Mike Mahaney** admits there is work to be done. He has called for the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners to allocate about 10 percent of its total budget to the reserve accounts. He would like to see the county maintain about \$12 million in its reserves. It will take time, however, before that will happen.

But the county is on track toward financial responsibility as it follows **Mahaney's** lead.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
February 11, 2006

NASSAU COUNTY Costly loophole

It's good to be a Nassau County employee, if you were hired before Oct. 1, 2005. Under the county's retirement rules, prior to last October, all employees could technically retire after working just six years in government. Starting a government job at 21 and then retiring at age 27 with paid health benefits until the age of 65 and retirement pay doesn't sound so bad, does it? That's the way business used to be conducted in Nassau County. Now, all newly hired employees have to work more years to receive benefits upon retirement. For instance, someone would have to work for the county for 15 years to receive 50 percent of coverage until age 65, or 30-plus years to receive 100 percent of coverage. Employees hired before Oct. 1, 2005, are grandfathered in.

"We've done what we can to limit the liability," said **Mike Mahaney**, county administrator, who noticed the loophole when he joined the county 18 months ago. "And we've done what we can to limit future liability." But the liability could be costly, if employees decide to take advantage of the loophole. County officials did not have a breakdown on how much it could cost if employees were opportunistic. And there are no plans to go back and figure out how the county could protect itself, should the worst happen.

Mahaney said the county cannot go back and change the rules for all employees because it would be similar to tampering with a contract. Though the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners should be commended for taking **Mahaney's** advice on closing the loophole, more work needs to be done to make sure taxpayers are getting their money's worth when it comes to government employees. Until then, here's hoping people who work for Nassau County government don't take advantage of their legal rights. Otherwise, the county could find itself in some dire financial circumstances.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times Union
September 10, 2005

Budget trims boost county's funds \$6 million

By Kevin Turner

Thanks to a year of fiscal belt-tightening, Nassau County is pulling out of the financial dire straits it's been stuck in, the county administrator said Tuesday. There is now about \$16 million in various Nassau County accounts, compared with \$10 million on Sept. 1, **Mike Mahaney** said. "Have we made progress? Absolutely," **Mahaney** said. "Do we still have a way to go? Absolutely." Although next year's budget will fund more than this year's, it still won't cover everything, he said. For two years, the Nassau County Commission has struggled with the budget, scraping the bottom of its financial barrel and depleting reserve money. That lack of reserves and fiscal direction led Fitch Ratings Ltd. to lower the county's bond rating from an "A+" rating to an "A" in 2004.

This year, news that former Clerk of Courts employee Julie Mixon had stolen \$1 million in county funds caused another drop, to an "A-," **Mahaney** said. "We need to finish the audit, sue the [Mixon] estate and continue to improve our financial condition, which Nassau County's doing," **Mahaney** said. Commissioners have taken actions in the last year to bolster the county's reserves, and the county's finances are more fiscally robust than they were when **Mahaney** began the job in September, he said. "What this shows is that the county is in a much stronger financial situation. Now we're not in a financial crisis; we're in a much better financial position. The bottom line is that we've made significant progress," **Mahaney** said.

Clerk of Courts John Crawford expressed doubt the Fitch rating will improve and said it might dip again without a comprehensive and updated budget policy. At the Aug. 22 commission meeting, the Citizen's Budget Policy Reform Committee asked to meet with commissioners, but the date scheduled was Oct. 18 -- after the 2005-06 budget is complete. "All of the concerns Fitch has about Nassau County's financial position have been addressed by the committee's budget policy," Crawford said in a statement. "The budget policy was originally presented to the Board of County Commissioners on May 11. Had a budget policy been ultimately agreed upon and adopted by the commission, perhaps we would not have gotten another rating downgrade . . . [last] month. By not adopting a strengthened budget policy for 2005-06, we are risking elevating Fitch's concerns and increasing our chances of yet another bond rating downgrade."

Further downgrades could increase interest rates for future county loans, Crawford said. The recommended 2005-06 budget contains about \$1.5 million in purchases that weren't included in last year's budget, **Mahaney** said. "It's approaching normal, but we've still got lots of issues," he said. **Mahaney** presented spending recommendations for the 2005-06 fiscal year to the Nassau County Commission Wednesday. His recommendations included \$195,000 for library books, triple last year's \$61,000. But **Mahaney** is recommending that other library requests, such as new assistants for the Fernandina Beach, Callahan and Hilliard branches, and a manager for the Bryceville branch, be rejected. **Mahaney** recommended approval of \$97,500 in park

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

improvements requests, but rejection of \$99,000 in expansions at the Callahan ballpark. The county administrator said his recommendation for six new firefighters will save on overtime costs. "Under the existing union contract, five are allowed to be off on vacation at a time. We only have 30. Overtime can run over \$1 million a year. It makes financial sense to hire floaters and cut overtime by \$550,000," **Mahaney** said. He also recommended \$96,000 in new equipment for the fire department and \$431,330 in equipment for the rescue department, as well as \$475,000 in new equipment for road maintenance. Even with an improved budget, there are several projects that are still stalled, **Mahaney** said.

The county needs funds for a new countywide emergency radio system, for the American Beach Community Center, for the John Muir Ecological Park, and to bail out the West Nassau Landfill's finances. "My recommendation is to hold . . . [a budgeted surplus of] \$2 million for the landfill and for the radio system," **Mahaney** said. He suggested other projects could be funded through the sale of the old county hospital and county annex on 14th Street in Fernandina Beach. The Nassau County Commission is scheduled to adopt the county's final 2005-06 budget during a public hearing at 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 26.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
August 24, 2005

County's \$50,000 investigation finds \$15,000 problem

Author/Byline: KEVIN TURNER

A fact-finding group of county officials will give the results of its four-month investigation into contractor-related financial irregularities at the Nassau County Judicial Annex during a County Commission meeting at 9 a.m. today at the county annex on Pages Dairy Road. The St. Johns River Water Management District requires developers to provide an equal amount of permanent wetlands to make up for wetlands they destroy during construction. The group spent four months and more than \$50,000 to find that the total amount of money either paid to the wrong contractor or paid for work not done was \$15,700. Of the \$50,200, the county paid \$20,000 for court reporting, \$3,000 printing and the rest in costs for county officials who participated in the investigation.

And County Administrator **Mike Mahaney** said the amount of time estimated for county staff is on the low side. "There were more hours than that," **Mahaney** said. There was a lot of weekend hours. I would say my total hours that I've got in is about 140. All of the other three put in more hours into it than I did. They've probably got close to 180 to 200 hours into it."

The group found that the county paid contractor RJ's Underground more than \$159,000 to clear woods to create wetlands, but due to reported surveying confusion, subcontractor Holland Contractors didn't do \$7,100 worth of clearing. The county paid the project's engineer, McCranie and Associates, about \$4,600 for work that wasn't performed, the group found. McCranie's contract, however, allowed him to bill the county for the entire project in advance. The \$4,600 worth of work had not been completed earlier this week, county officials said. McCranie and Associates hired subcontractor LG2 to do environmental services. LG2 billed the county about \$4,000 directly for its work, instead of McCranie, which would have been proper procedure. The county paid the money to LG2. The fact-finding group recommended that the county seek repayment of \$11,100 from RJ's Underground and LG2.

Nassau County Commissioner Marianne Marshall's concerns sparked the allegations that snowballed into the county's fact-finding efforts. Marshall said it began with a phone conversation from William Cook, who owns the land around the Judicial Annex. Cook sold the annex property to the county. "He said [annex construction] was flooding his property and washing his road away. I said I would check it out," Marshall said. Marshall said she called former county Public Works Director Jack D'Amato to ask if he knew of any problems at the complex when he worked for the county. He told her he couldn't remember any, she said. Marshall said she asked him to look into it. Marshall said she regularly consults D'Amato, who was under mounting political pressure when he resigned as Public Works director in 2002, for information regarding drainage and other engineering issues. "He called me back later and said he had spoken to Lee Gerald [of LG2] and that there were major issues," Marshall said. Marshall began to investigate the wetland mitigation area's history. Her findings filled a three-ring binder,

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

which was later included in the fact-finding group's investigation results. Clerk of Courts John Crawford, apprised of Marshall's findings, wrote a letter to Gov. Jeb Bush, urging an investigation into allegations of county mismanagement.

The fact-finding group -- County Attorney Michael Mullin, County Administrator **Mike Mahaney**, Interim Administrative Services Director Cathy Lewis and Director of Engineering Services Jose Deliz -- began to investigate in March. **Mahaney** said the county used many resources during the investigation because other state agencies could take an interest in the case and the county's results had to be accurate. For instance, a court reporter, at a cost of about \$20,000, produced volumes of transcripts to record all meetings of the group. "I would not be a bit surprised if someone from the State Attorney's Office was there [at today's meeting]," **Mahaney** said. "They're monitoring it very closely."

Mahaney said that the allegations had to be explored fully in case the initial allegations into contract mispending turned out to be the tip of the iceberg. "How do you know it's \$15,000 and not \$150,000?" **Mahaney** asked.

After the fact-finding group interviewed John Holland of Holland Contractors about \$7,100 in land clearing the county paid for, but was not done, Holland wrote a letter to Deliz, alleging that Marshall had an ax to grind. "I think this is a personal vendetta against me, Dawn Stevenson and Dan McCranie by Commissioner Marshall because of Jack D'Amato," Holland wrote. "If Commissioner Marshall would work with people instead of working against them she would be doing the county a favor. Maybe if Commissioner Marshall and D'Amato had put this much effort into the job while it was actually going on we would not need to be fact-finding now." "That is not true; that is not my nature," Marshall said in response to the excerpt from Holland's letter. "My job is to protect the citizens of this county. Jack helped me when he was . . . [with] the county and he's helped me when he's been with other people. He knows the county. He was born and raised here. If he's willing to help me, I'm willing to listen."

Marshall said she submitted her findings due to what she said were "red flags," not personal or political motivation. "People can say anything they want. Let the facts speak for themselves. If I hadn't received that phone call from Mr. Cook, I would never have looked into this. Never," Marshall said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
August 23, 2005

Fitch downgrades Nassau County's bond rating Thefts from accounts played role in decision

Author/Byline: JORDAN RODACK

A major international ratings agency has downgraded Nassau County's bond rating, citing a series of financial concerns and specifically the theft of more than \$1.35 million from county accounts. Fitch Ratings, a worldwide rating agency, lowered the county's overall rating from A+ to A, meaning the county could pay more to borrow money. It marked the second consecutive year that Fitch has lowered the bond rating. Fitch warned of further downgrades if the county's financial condition does not improve. In order to avoid that, the county must improve its cash flow, implement strong internal controls and adopt a balanced budget that does not include borrowing money to pay for operations, according to the ratings agency. "The downgrade also reflects serious internal control and budgetary weaknesses that led to the erosion of the county's reserve position and, most recently, to a failure to prevent or uncover an employee theft of about \$875,000 from the Clerk of Court offices," according to the report.

The report, issued earlier this month, is based on research that is now several months old. The amount of missing money has increased to \$1.35 million, according to county officials. The downgrade was prompted by what Fitch called a "rapid deterioration of the county's financial position between fiscal years 2000 and 2003, and expected negative financial results in fiscal 2004." The ratings agency also expressed concern over the continued use of an auditing firm that failed to uncover the theft by Jessica Julia Mixon, a former clerk employee. Mixon committed suicide in April. The firm, Farmand, Farmand & Farmand, is completing an audit of the county's books, which was pushed back because of the theft investigation. The audit must be completed by a state mandated deadline of Sept. 30. Anwar Farmand, who is responsible for the audit, was unavailable for comment Monday. But his partner, Mike Farmand, said the firm does not have reason to be concerned. He called the firm's failure to detect the theft "an unfortunate error."

The county's finances and prospects will be re-evaluated once the audited financial statements for fiscal 2004 are completed, said County Clerk John Crawford. County Administrator **Mike Mahaney** said the county was already taking steps to correct the county's financial situation. The county has increased its reserves and is raising more revenue by instituting a tax on gasoline and possibly raising county landfill fees. He said the key to improving county finances is to "try to think not for next year, but beyond." But in order to accomplish that, the county must adopt a new budget revenue-driven policy and end the use of drawing down reserves to pay for recurring expenses, Crawford said. Upon taking office in January, Crawford set up a Citizens Budget Policy Reform Committee to address the county's financial situation. The committee, consisting of volunteers, presented the policy to the Board of County Commissioners in May. The commission has not yet taken up the matter.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
May 28, 2005

Gas tax needed, county executive says Mahaney: 5 cents vital to fund road projects

By Kevin Turner

County Administrator **Mike Mahaney** has a tough sell. Since proposing that the county institute a 5-cent gas tax, county officials have received criticism from citizens and the media, officials say. But **Mahaney** says that, while unpopular, the money is desperately needed to fund road projects. He has now brought his case to the public with an article that says to fix the roads, "we must take our collective medicine." However, it's going to be a tough sell to county commissioners, who say they've heard from unhappy constituents who already are paying some of the highest gas prices ever. Four of five commissioners will have to approve the new tax.

Florida allows counties to levy up to 5 cents per gallon on gas to use for roads. County Attorney Michael Mullin said the requirement for a "super majority" is a state law. Already, one commissioner, Marianne Marshall, has expressed opposition to the plan. That means the other four commissioners -- Chairman Ansley Acree, Jim B. Higginbotham, Tom Branan and Floyd Vanzant -- would have to approve it. "It's a detriment," Marshall said. "The cost per gallon in Nassau County is higher than Duval County and Georgia. All this is going to do is hurt Nassau County. It's going to hurt the people who live and work in Nassau County."

There will be a public hearing on the issue during a meeting that begins at 6 p.m. June 13 in the Yulee county annex on Page's Dairy Road. **Mahaney** said he recommended the tax because bad county roads could go a second year without paving. Property tax and budget cuts were poorer options, he said. "I'm trying to do what I think is in the best interest of 70,000 people in Nassau County," **Mahaney** said. "No one likes to pay additional money, but I don't see the county solving its transportation problems without any additional revenue." **Mahaney** said the more than \$1 million the additional gas tax would raise in a year will pay to pave about 13 miles of road each year.

A recent state law restricted how municipalities can impose and use impact fees for road improvements, and the gas tax is necessary to pay for additional road work, **Mahaney** said. For example, if a county or town widens a road using impact fees, it can use that money for the new pavement. However, the existing road cannot be repaved with impact funds, even if it's inferior to the widened section, **Mahaney** said. **Mahaney** is now presenting his transportation plan to the public, saying the price of taking no action, or using money from other sources, would hurt the county more than a gas tax.

"Essentially, what I'm trying to do is give them the big picture as I see it," **Mahaney** said. "I want everybody to have all the facts. There's not one panacea that's going to solve this. It's going to take impact fees, developer agreements and the gas tax. No one aspect can carry the entire load. It's got to be all of that. These are the various components that complete the transportation plan." **Mahaney** said he thinks there will be severe traffic problems on Florida A1A after more

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

than 3,000 planned new homes are built on the Amelia Concourse. "You think you've got problems on A1A now, wait until six or seven years from now when those houses are built along the Amelia Concourse," **Mahaney** said. "You're already at [traffic] failure on A1A."

Mahaney said the gas tax will pay for road paving, and developers will be asked to build and improve roads to divert traffic from A1A. **Mahaney** said he hopes that, if approved, the first of the gas tax revenue will be available to the county by Jan. 1. Mullin said the commission will have to approve the new tax by July 1 for that to happen. Last year, commissioners discussed a gas tax to pay for a new emergency radio system, but dropped it quickly because of public opposition. Sixteen Florida counties levy at least a part of the 5-cent gasoline tax. Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Columbia, DeSoto, Highlands, Lee, Martin, Palm Beach, Polk, St. Lucie, Sarasota, Suwannee and Volusia counties all charge the full nickel at the pump. Miami-Dade County levies 3 cents and Hernando County levies 2 cents.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times Union
February 9, 2005

County faces hard choices to make up \$2 million shortfall

By Taylor Mueller

To lessen the blow of a \$2 million revenue loss at the county's west landfill, county commissioners are discussing not filling two position and shortening operating hours. "We have started taking the initial steps," County Administrator **Mike Mahaney** said. "It's like eating an elephant -- you have to take one bite at a time." The \$2 million loss occurred when Advanced Services of Jacksonville, one of Nassau County's biggest landfill users, quit bringing its trash on Jan. 1. Advanced bought out Waste Services residential contracts in Jacksonville, and had to sign a contract with Duval County to dump all of its trash at the Trail Ridge Landfill in Jacksonville. Advanced saved \$2 a ton by using the Jacksonville landfill.

That meant a loss of 300 tons of trash a day at Nassau's landfill. **Mahaney** said the vacancy freezes and shorter hours will only save the county about \$50,000 a year. If approved, the landfill's hours of operation would be cut from 65 hours a week to 56. The landfill would close at 4 p.m. instead of 5 p.m. during the week, and at 1 p.m. on Saturdays rather than 5 p.m., though that time period is when most residential users dump trash. **Mahaney** said officials are talking to larger contractors that dump trash at the landfill, like Clay County, to determine if the shorter hours will interfere with their schedules. "Preliminary indications tell us that we can live with closing the landfill at 4 p.m. Monday through Friday," **Mahaney** said.

Commissioners voted to work with Clerk of the Courts John Crawford to resolve revenue shortfalls at the landfill. Crawford and **Mahaney** will bring recommendations to the board at its Feb. 23 meeting. **Mahaney** said his proposal is just a starting point for fixing problems at the landfill. "The bottom line is that the landfill assessment fee paid by residents will have to go up," **Mahaney** said. "But this wouldn't happen until next February, if we did it." About 27,000 county residents pay a \$45 annual landfill assessment fee, which allows them to dump trash at the landfill. The landfill already has the county \$16 million in debt and commissioners say they need to find solutions to fix the revenue shortfalls. "We know we're not going to meet our revenue projections," **Mahaney** said. "So we're going to start taking steps to make up for the lost revenue."

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times Union
December 22, 2004

County panel hears of tough financial issues New administrator tells commission it faces credit crisis

By Amelia A. Hart

Restoring Nassau County's credit reputation must be the county's No. 1 priority in the coming year, County Administrator **Mike Mahaney** said last week. **Mahaney**, who joined the county in September, gave commissioners his assessment of the county's rocky financial status on Dec. 15. He also outlined the hard political choices they could have to make to turn the county's finances around. Those choices could include increasing the county gas tax to pave roads, creating taxing districts to pay for fire protection in new developments, selling county property -- including the 14th Street Annex in Fernandina Beach -- to raise money to pay off a \$4.5 million line of credit, and cutting back county employee health insurance and leave benefits.

"These are suggestions I think are important and critical," **Mahaney** said. "The No. 1 goal has got to be a financial plan to get off credit watch. And that's going to take time." **Mahaney's** comments were in reference to Fitch Ratings' decision this year to downgrade the rating of Nassau County's \$34.5 million outstanding public improvement revenue bonds from A+ to A, and to put the bonds on a negative rating watch. Bond rating reports evaluate the likelihood of a bond issuer defaulting. In its September rating report, Fitch said it downgraded Nassau County's bonds because of the dramatic drop in the county's reserve funds. According to Fitch, Nassau County's general fund reserves decreased by \$5.2 million in three years. Reserves made up 37 percent of all county spending in Fiscal Year 2000, but only 7 percent in Fiscal Year 2003.

Mistakes and flawed assumptions in the 2004 budget reduced reserves further. Fitch analysts said it was likely the county would be forced to use credit to maintain cash flow in the first part of 2005. In the report downgrading the bonds, Fitch said it would review the Negative Rating Watch when the books on Fiscal Year 2004 are closed, the Fiscal 2005 budget is passed, and newly elected county officials have a chance to come up with a plan for restoring the county's financial stability. Nassau County will be paying about \$2.3 million a year until 2031 to pay off the bond, **Mahaney** said.

It's crucial for county officials to come up with a financial plan to pay that debt, put money into reserve and cover other pressing expenses, including the \$4.5 million credit line, which the county paid nothing toward last year. "They have put you on a negative credit watch, and you've got to come back with a plan for regaining fiscal stability," **Mahaney** said. "But they're watching. They're watching very closely to see how we proceed. . . ." The financial pressures on the county already are mounting, **Mahaney** said.

At current spending levels, Nassau County Fire Rescue is going to be \$250,000 above budget for salary and fuel. Electricity costs are running over in several county departments, health care costs are escalating, and the county doesn't have money set aside to cover possible lump-sum payouts

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

for sick and annual leave that might have to be paid to retiring employees. In four years, new accounting regulations will require the county to account for those kind of "unfunded liabilities" in its budget. Those costs could be in the millions of dollars. "That figures scares me," **Mahaney** said. **Mahaney** gave a litany of other expenses on the horizon. The county is running out of space at its landfill in Callahan, and is going to have to find the money to expand the current landfill, or build a new one, long before it pays off the bond to close three previous landfills. There is increasing demand from residents to pave roads and to repave roads that already have asphalt, he said.

The developer of Heron Isles is building a new fire station for the development, but the county has no money budgeted to equip or staff it, **Mahaney** said. "You're talking a million dollars a year here, guys," **Mahaney** said. Commissioners will have to make hard choices to cut costs and raise revenue, **Mahaney** said. Many will be politically controversial, and several have already been proven to be so, he said. In 2001, commissioners backed off a proposed tax district for fire protection after protests by county residents.

In April, when preliminary informational discussion about the gas tax raised public ire, commissioners passed a policy statement saying they wouldn't levy any part of the additional 5 cents per gallon of gas tax the county still has available. Under the terms of the legal settlement with the city of Fernandina Beach that paved the way for the county to build the Judicial Annex in Yulee, the the county must tear down the current 14th Street annex and build a new office building to house the property appraiser, tax collector and supervisor of elections. "These are hard decisions," **Mahaney** said. ". . . You're going to have to do some things that may not be politically popular, but from a business point of view, increase revenue."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times Union
September 15, 2004

Welcome to work - a hurricane's coming Fernandina: What a way to start a job

By Amelia A. Hart

Mike Mahaney's eyes were a little red around edges Sept. 8. But that wasn't surprising. **Mahaney** officially started his new job as Nassau County administrator Sept. 1 -- and seven days later he hadn't had a chance to stop. **Mahaney** arrived in Nassau County only to find a massive Hurricane Frances, heading his way. The day after he arrived, commissioners declared a state of emergency and the county began gearing up for the worst, but hoping for the best. Even before he knew everybody's name, **Mahaney** was marshaling the county government's preparations for the storm, conferring with the heads of the county's major businesses about their storm plans, meeting with U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson in the county's emergency operations center, and working through the holiday weekend as Hurricane Frances slowly churned by.

Mahaney spent the first few days of his first full week focused on after-effects of Frances, whose high winds and heavy rains left thousands in the county without power, flooded roads and toppled trees. He also was trying to file for Federal Emergency Management Agency funds to recoup the county's expenses. Along the way, **Mahaney** attended his first three Nassau County Commission meetings that dealt with, among other things, the volatile issues of animal control and the upcoming budget. And before the week was out, Hurricane Ivan was looming on the horizon. Welcome to Nassau County. "I've met a lot of people very quickly," **Mahaney** said. "And I've learned a lot in the first few days. For one thing, I've learned you have one power company on the island, you have another one off, and yet another one in the more western areas." Commissioners hired **Mahaney** to be the county's new administrator in June, replacing former County Coordinator Walt Gossett who had resigned 15 months earlier. **Mahaney**, 54, negotiated the Sept. 1 start date in order to give he and his wife, Trish, time to make the transition to Nassau County, from Kannapolis, N.C., where he was city manager. That arrival date has put **Mahaney** at the head of the county's administration during an interesting period in time.

The county is currently in negotiations with its fire and road and bridge unions, preparing to resume running animal control, wrestling with its budget and dealing with one threatening hurricane after another. Commission Chairman Floyd Vanzant said on Friday that during his first week, **Mahaney** had struck him as an outgoing person willing to wade into the tasks at hand, despite the handicap of being brand new to the county. "He's not scared to jump right in," Vanzant said. ". . . He has been hit hard his first full week. But I think he's going to learn the ropes." When things quiet down, **Mahaney** wants to get around to doing what he had expected to be doing his first weeks on the job: spending time getting to know department heads, asking them about their employees, and letting them tell him about Nassau County through their eyes. Until then, **Mahaney** will keep learning on his feet. "Well, you just do what has to be done," he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
July 3, 2004

County selects veteran manager Nassau: Mahaney's 25-year record cited

Author/Byline: Amelia A. Hart

Fifteen months after Nassau County's coordinator stepped down, county commissioners have found a county administrator to replace him. Commissioners unanimously voted June 26 to hire **Michael G. Mahaney**, currently city manager of Kannapolis, N.C., as the county's new administrator. **Mahaney**, 54, will start no later than Sept. 1.

Though **Mahaney**, who also served as city manager of nearby St. Marys, Ga., for almost 12 years, has never overseen a county administration, he said his experience in helping his previous communities deal with growth will transfer to Nassau County. "I've had a great deal of experience protecting quality of life," **Mahaney** said. ". . . I function the best when it's high growth like [Nassau County is facing.] I'm really excited about the job, and want to get down there."

Commissioner Vickie Samus said she was impressed by **Mahaney's** 25 years of experience and his track record in landing outside dollars to pay for major projects. She said **Mahaney** can handle the transition from city to county government. "It's just a matter of changing gears; government is government," Samus said. "I just think he's a very sharp individual and will do us a great job."

Mahaney began his career in the public sector in 1978 as assistant to the director of public works in Falls Church, Va. In 1979, he became director of public works, city engineer and assistant city manager in Oberlin, Ohio, then took his first manager job in 1981 in Somerset, Pa. He moved to Covington, Va., in 1986, where he stayed until he took the St. Marys job in 1990. He became city manager of Kannapolis, which has a population of 50,000, in 2002. **Mahaney** has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, a master's in business administration and is registered as professional engineer in Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania. He will earn \$115,000 annually. Former County Coordinator Walt Gossett earned a little more than \$87,000 annually when he resigned in March 2003. Larry Myers, who has served as the county's interim administrator since January, was paid \$1,932 weekly, or roughly \$100,000 a year. The county will pay up to \$10,000 in moving expenses for **Mahaney**, and provide him a \$500 per month automobile allowance.

In a cost-saving move, Myers will leave his interim post July 20. He will be replaced by a county management committee of Samus, County Attorney Mike Mullin and Clerk of the Courts Chip Oxley until **Mahaney** comes on board. Mullin, Oxley and alternating county commissioners handled county administration duties from March 2003 until January.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Michael Greig Mahaney** is listed below.
Deleted was information about Mr. Legg's experience and opinions about him]

Charlotte Observer, The (NC)
July 1, 2004

**MAHANNEY'S PAY WILL GO ON FOR 2 MONTHS - LEGG TAKES OVER AS
INTERIM CITY MANAGER IN KANNAPOLIS**

Author/Byline: RONNIE GLASSBERG

Former Kannapolis City Manager **Mike Mahaney**, who left office Tuesday, will continue to pick up a paycheck for the next two months, even though his role with the city is unclear. Meanwhile, Assistant City Manager Mike Legg, who is filling in as interim manager, is emerging as the early favorite to replace **Mahaney**. One City Council member said he's open to forgoing a search and hiring Legg. **Mahaney** is taking the job of county administrator in Nassau County, Fla., Sept. 1 at a salary of \$115,000.

Under **Mahaney's** employment agreement with the city, he was required to provide 60 days' notice, keeping him on the job until the end of August. But the City Council decided to hand over the helm of city operations to Legg on Wednesday, one day after **Mahaney** turned in his resignation. "If a person is employed in another place, they have their mind there," said Mayor Ray Moss. **Mahaney** will continue to earn his city pay, but according to a city news release, he will be a consultant. Legg said he's not sure about the details of what **Mahaney** will do. "As needed, we will call on him to assist with special projects or things that may come up," Legg said.

Mahaney earns \$104,500 and \$6,000 for an annual car allowance. He has 232 hours of vacation remaining, or 29 working days, according to city spokeswoman Jennifer Woodford. **Mahaney's** resignation is officially effective Aug. 30. Since the city would have had to pay him for those days, that leaves only about 11 days in question. "We're just doing a transition here," **Mahaney** said. "I'm still going to be assisting them as needed, but I will be turning more and more things over to Mike Legg, and assuming a lesser and lesser role." Legg said he would be in charge effective Wednesday but didn't immediately know whether the city would retain **Mahaney's** authority to sign checks.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Salisbury Post
May 27, 2004

Budget slicing: Kannapolis aims to cut tax rate enough to offset property revaluations

By Scott Jenkins

The City Council sliced \$73,700 more from the proposed 2004-2005 city budget Wednesday, bringing total cuts to \$540,000. That total equals 2.6 cents on the property tax rate, and gets the council within a penny of lowering the rate enough to offset a Cabarrus County property revaluation. And city officials may not have to make more cuts to the proposed \$33.2 million budget, if they can scrape together enough leftover cash from the accounts of various completed city building projects. The current property tax rate is 53 cents for every \$100 of property value, meaning a person who owns a \$100,000 house would pay \$530 in property taxes. The revaluation increased property values, though, so that \$100,000 could be worth \$110,000, or \$115,000, or some other new figure come July 1, depending on where it is.

Some council members say they want to lower the property tax rate to 49.4 cents to offset the increase, though that reduction just cancels out the total increase in tax revenue and doesn't mean everyone's tax bill would be unchanged. "I think we owe it to our citizens to keep our tax rate as low as we can," Councilman Randy Cauthen said. Referring to laid-off workers of the bankrupt Pillowtex Corp., he said, "We have citizens who are in dire straits financially." To get the tax rate down, the council agreed last week to hold off on buying two new police cars to replace aging, high mileage cars, to freeze two vacant police officer positions and to pull \$100,000 worth of street paving projects from the budget, among other things.

But the council rejected other proposed money savers -- such as freezing employees' merit-based pay raises and eliminating three new firefighters -- and told City Manager **Mike Mahaney** to come back with a new list. Wednesday, the council agreed to take out one more police car, reducing the total replacement vehicles in the budget from 10 to seven. But a 4-3 majority voted against a proposal to freeze two more vacant police officer positions. Police Chief Paul Brown said the department needs "every position we have allocated," but it typically carries vacancies in its 78 sworn-officer slots and freezing jobs or delaying vehicle purchases are the only way he can find substantial savings. And, as he did last week, Brown said the proposed hiring freeze wouldn't affect the safety of citizens.

Some council members said they'd rather be safe than sorry. "I want them to be available when the citizens need them," Councilman Ken Geathers said. A former Pillowtex manager, Geathers said he is "one of those citizens that lost his job ... so I want the tax rate lowered. But we have got to run this city, and we can't do that by gutting every department." The council also voted against a slate of proposed cuts in the Kannapolis Fire Department budget, including a reduction in the funds used to pay volunteer firefighters and medical responders.

A couple of council members got testy when **Mahaney** rolled out an office chair -- its red cloth worn and faded from around-the-clock use in the Police Department's dispatch center before it

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

was given to the criminal investigation division. Not replacing that chair and others like it could save the city \$2,725. **Mahaney** said employees could still use the chair, and others like it. "But is it wise? Is it the way you want to treat your people?" Cauthen stopped **Mahaney**. "I really don't like the way this is going," he said. Mayor Ray Moss agreed, saying, "We don't need displays like that." **Mahaney** said he was trying to show the council "both sides" of the proposed cuts, but some council members said the city manager was only presenting the negative effects. "I want to weigh both sides, too, but I'm going to have to hear a presentation of both sides if I'm going to weigh them," Mayor Pro Tem Paul Bessent said.

Mahaney's proposals Wednesday weren't all cuts. The council approved, on a 4-3 vote, adding \$50,000 to the budget for participation in a countywide economic development plan. Commissioned by business leaders and the Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce, a study by a University of North Carolina professor says the county should eliminate the Cabarrus Economic Development Corp. and refocus its efforts to bring in industry and jobs. Some council members say they saw no reason to include the money before knowing whether the county would accept the study's conclusions. Bessent said if the city wants in the game, it has to pay the ante. "We can't expect them to be as excited about representing us as someone who's funding them," he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Salisbury Post (NC)
January 15, 2003

Kannapolis gives city manager good review, raise

Author/Byline: Scott Jenkins

City Manager **Mike Mahaney** got good reviews and a 5 percent raise after an evaluation this week of his first year on the job. **Mahaney's** base salary increases to \$99,750. An amount equal to 10 percent of that is paid in deferred salary.

The City Council met in closed session Monday to discuss **Mahaney's** performance. Mayor Ray Moss summed up the review by saying **Mahaney** "has done an excellent job for us." "It's been a trying time for the city, and Mr. **Mahaney** reacted well in facing these immense crises thrust upon us," Moss said.

The council voted Jan. 21, 2001, to hire **Mahaney**, formerly city manager in St. Mary's, Ga. He won out over 86 other candidates to succeed David Hales, who left in September 2000 to take the city manager job in Bend, Ore. **Mahaney** shook things up almost immediately, recommending a 7 cent property tax increase that was later cut to 4 cents, pushing the council to make a decision on a long-discussed municipal complex and courting megamillionaire David Murdock to invest in the city where he owns a large portion of the property. He also took the reigns in the midst of a drought unlike any this region has seen in a century, when a sluggish economy threatened to derail economic development and when the state was sharing its budgetary pain with local governments.

"I, obviously, think I've done a good job," **Mahaney** said Tuesday. "It hasn't been an easy first year. The first week I was here, the governor took money." **Mahaney** said the December ice storm that left nearly all of Kannapolis without power and economic uncertainty that forced the city to shelve plans for the municipal complex have also made his freshman year a little tougher than he might have imagined. But, he said, there have been successes as well. Convincing Murdock to donate \$200,000 for the cost of a Dale Earnhardt statue is one, he said.

During the coming year, **Mahaney** said he expects to spend a lot of time on securing water sources for the future, helping to get a public bus system running with Concord and staying on top of economic development and the city's finances. He said one of the biggest challenges will be finding a way to ease a moratorium on new development forced by the drought. The city needs to keep expanding its tax base, he said. "If we aren't able to work out something where we can get the building moratorium off, some of our financial plans will have to be delayed," he said. "Ineed that new development.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Post
June 1, 2002

Proposed budget is defended

By Scott Jenkins

New City Manager **Mike Mahaney** joked this week that he might be "run out of town on a rail" after the City Council got together to discuss his first proposed budget. They didn't break out the tar and feathers at a budget workshop Thursday, but several council members said they can't support the 7-cent property tax increase that helps fund **Mahaney's** proposed \$31.9-million plan. **Mahaney**, hired in February to succeed former City Manager David Hales, calls his budget an aggressive one that attempts to incorporate the needs and wants he heard highlighted at the council's planning retreat.

That was a challenge, he said, because of the uncertainty surrounding the state's budget picture and the impact that could have on Kannapolis' finances, and because of a tax rate that's remained flat while costs have gone up. Besides the tax increase and a water and sewer rate hike to pay for expanding the city's water system and tapping into new sources, he proposes new revenue sources, like a business license tax. And **Mahaney** includes the first payment of a \$16.83-million loan the city hasn't gotten. He's asked California financier and major Kannapolis property owner David Murdock for a 30-year interest-free loan to construct a new city hall and police department. The council plans two more workshops on the budget before a June 24 public hearing. Here are some major budget issues:

Revenue

Mahaney's proposed tax increase would be the largest since 1990, when the council raised the rate from 38 to 45 cents per \$100 of assessed value. The rate has since fluctuated, remaining at 49 cents the past two years. The city manager said the tax hike would only bring Kannapolis closer to what other North Carolina cities charge residents for services. He compared Kannapolis with a half-dozen similar-sized cities -- Hickory, Goldsboro, Salisbury, Sanford, Burlington and Chapel Hill -- that don't own "cash cow" electric systems. Kannapolis had the second-lowest rate behind Burlington, which charged 42 cents this year. The others ranged from 50.4 cents in Chapel Hill to 62 cents in Goldsboro.

Meanwhile, he said, the city must build its services, adding firefighters and constructing a new fire station among the needs a study released this year found crucial. "Those things cost money," **Mahaney** said. Three council members said Thursday they cannot support a 7-cent increase on the tax rate. Councilman Richard Anderson said he doesn't think **Mahaney** is making a fair comparison with the other cities. Four of them have larger tax bases -- Hickory and Chapel Hill each has a tax base about double that of Kannapolis -- and all of them have been in existence a lot longer than Kannapolis, which incorporated in 1984. "A city that's 15 years old cannot have what it has taken a city 50 years to build," Anderson said. Councilman Paul Bessent argued that Kannapolis is, regardless of its age, a "major North Carolina city" and its leaders must act like it, ensuring the revenue to provide for its responsibilities.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Mahaney said that future development, industrial and residential, in the 10-square-mile Coddle Creek area annexed in 1999 could expand the tax base and stabilize the tax rate. State action could also affect city finances. To help cover a state budget hole this year, Gov. Mike Easley withheld \$950,000 due to Kannapolis in state-collected taxes and reimbursements for repealed taxes. With a bigger state budget shortfall projected in the coming fiscal year, **Mahaney** and his staff haven't included \$670,700 in reimbursements Kannapolis would have received. The city budget does include some \$1.38 million in state-collected franchise, natural gas, beer and wine and excise taxes. And it includes \$787,000 from a hoped-for 1/2-cent sales tax increase that would likely have to be approved by the General Assembly and counties. **Mahaney** has also figured in about \$200,000 in revenue from a new business privilege license based on gross receipts. In addition to the revenue, he said the new tax would give the city greater control over what businesses operate in Kannapolis.

Fire and police

In a study presented to council in January, consultants called the Kannapolis Fire Department "woefully and dangerously understaffed" and said that endangers residents and firefighters. The consultants praised the department's quick response time and the dedication of its volunteer firefighters, but said the uncertainty of their availability at the onset of a fire is cause for concern. The study recommended creating 66 new paid positions in the department over the next decade. Fire Chief Larry Phillips requested 18 paid firefighters in his budget request. **Mahaney** recommends six firefighters and a training officer at the rank of captain to keep up with ever-increasing training requirements for paid and volunteer firefighters. Not all would be hired right away, and the budget includes about \$89,490 to pay them.

Mahaney also includes a fifth city fire station, another recommendation of the study. The city would build the \$1.85-million station in Coddle Creek, the 10-square-mile area annexed in 1999. The first \$176,120 payment of a 15-year bank loan is in the proposed budget. Assistant City Manager Mike Legg said state law requires the city to make the station operational by the end of 2004. He said plans call for the city to staff and equip it over the next two budget years. The Police Department budget includes no new personnel. **Mahaney** recommends continuing the schedule of replacing aging and high-mileage vehicles with 15 new cars in the upcoming budget at a cost of \$345,000. The budget also includes \$18,200 to establish an incentive-pay program for bi-lingual police officers. **Mahaney** said the program would specifically target Spanish-speaking officers. The department currently has two. Employees with other city departments have had some instruction in speaking Spanish, but the police department needs fluent speakers, **Mahaney** said, recalling a recent shooting that involved Latinos. "When you get a running gun battle on Cannon Boulevard on Sunday morning and nobody that's involved speaks English, you need a Spanish-speaking officer," he said.

Water

The average monthly water and sewer bill would increase by more than 11 percent under **Mahaney's** proposed budget. Actual increases range from 96 cents for someone using 1,000 gallons or less to \$9.60 for 10,000 gallons. Kannapolis would use the \$1.2 million in additional revenue to fund "a multitude of things," **Mahaney** said. Those include tapping into new water

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

sources, expanding the city's system, replacing some aging lines and paying higher waste treatment fees to the Water and Sewer Authority of Cabarrus County.

City officials plan to issue \$6 million in revenue bonds in September to fund the first phase of a \$21-million water and sewer extension plan. The plan focuses heavily on the Coddle Creek area, where **Mahaney** said future growth could end up paying the debt service. "That's where your \$500,000 houses are going to be," **Mahaney** said. The city manger said he'll ask the council in June to lift the moratorium on water and sewer system extensions and possibly to ease, but keep, the mandatory restrictions on water use.

City officials expect to receive a report soon on potential long-term solutions to nagging water-supply problems that have forced the restrictions and prompted the council to halt new extensions. Kannapolis is already pursuing some new water, and the increased rates fund two of those projects. The budget includes \$349,000 to make the first payment on Kannapolis' share of a line carrying treated water from Salisbury and \$155,000 for required purchases. The budget also includes debt service for a \$945,000 line on the new Kannapolis Parkway that will deliver water from Charlotte through Concord. **Mahaney** and some council members have said that, in the long term, they favor a raw-water line allowing Kannapolis to draw directly from the Yadkin River in Rowan County.

Public transportation

A study presented in January recommended that Kannapolis and Concord partner to establish a public bus system. Start-up costs for the system would be about \$2.6 million, with about \$2 million going to pay for eight buses and \$500,000 to build a transfer center, probably at NorthEast Medical Center, the study said. Federal and state governments would pick up about 90 percent of that cost, but only if the local governments act quickly to take advantage of a federal fund created specifically, but temporarily, for such projects.

Concord would pay two-thirds of the remaining costs and Kannapolis would pay one-third, based on the number of route miles each city would have. **Mahaney** proposes adding \$5 to the vehicle license tax, bringing the total Kannapolis automobile owners pay to \$10. State law allows the extra \$5 only for use in funding public transportation systems. The additional tax would generate about \$160,000 this year, while Kannapolis' share of operating the bus system -- which would probably start up in spring 2003 -- would be around \$55,000. The remaining money would be set aside in a transit fund and applied to future costs. "I'm sure there's going to be some people complaining about the transit tax," **Mahaney** said. "But some of those same people are going to be the ones complaining when the roads are clogged and the air quality is awful."

Parks and recreation

Increases in overtime and part-time salary allowances would increase the Parks and Recreation Department budget by nearly \$50,000 over the current year, according to **Mahaney's** recommendation. But department Director Gary Mills requested a nearly \$150,000 increase, mainly to hire three additional full-time employees to augment a staff consisting of Mills and Parks Supervisor Loran Schulte. "We're having to continue to operate with part-time and it's

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

killing us," Mills said. When the new Irish Buffalo Creek Park opens in the fall, "it's going to be tough." Mills, hired in 2000 as the city's first-ever parks director, said state regulations restrict his use of part-time help and forces him to rely on volunteer and prison labor for the equivalent of five full-time workers.

Mills also asked for \$124,500 for capital outlay, including \$45,000 for improvements at Baker's Creek Park. **Mahaney** recommends \$35,000 in capital expense, with Baker's Creek Park not included. The parks director said this week he'll ask council to go after a state grant this year to begin making changes at 16-acre Village Park, including a new amphitheater, a carousel and a miniature train ride. The entire project would cost about \$2.2 million, none of which is included in **Mahaney's** budget, and could be done in phases over several years, Mills said.

City hall and police station

Kannapolis leases space for its city offices on Oak Avenue and two buildings to house the police department on Main Street. The city pays Atlantic American Properties \$114,900 annually for the space. Police functions are shoehorned into 7,600 square feet. A space needs study last year said the department needed 31,000 square feet for its current operations, and recommended a 44,000-square-foot structure to handle future growth.

The same study recommended a 54,500-square-foot city hall to meet the city's needs for the next 20 years, and said one built just for current administration would have to be 26,500 square feet. Total costs for the consultants' recommendations topped \$25 million. **Mahaney** recommends building a 60,000-square-foot complex on property the city owns at Loop Road and Oak Avenue, the site of the U.S. Post Office branch.

He has asked Murdock, a former Cannon Mills owner who still has substantial local holdings through Atlantic American Properties, to loan the city the money to build it. Councilman Richard Anderson says he couldn't see adding a payment to the budget that would equal 3 cents on the property tax rate in such tough economic times. But Councilman Paul Bessent contends there may never be a better time. Building contractors have lost work to the economic downturn as well, he says. "Right now, we probably have a better opportunity to build something like this than we would when the economy rebounds," Bessent said. "I think it takes some courage; we all have to have some courage to do something like this, but it's long past due."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Salisbury Post (NC)
July 23, 2002

Kannapolis adds business tax

Author/Byline: Scott Jenkins

The City Council approved a new business license tax Monday that City Manager **Mike Mahaney** says will bring the city an estimated \$200,000 this year. **Mahaney** said the process will also help the city get a handle on who is doing business in Kannapolis, which city officials say hasn't always been easy because the county issues building permits and certificates of occupancy. "It helps us get our arms around what's going on out there, as far as businesses going in that, sometimes, we're not finding out about until after the fact," **Mahaney** said.

City attorney Wally Safrit stressed, however, that the ordinance adopted by the council on a 5-2 vote was a revenue-based ordinance and not one that regulates business, which a city cannot legally do. Even so, some council members had concerns about the potential effect of the new tax on the business-friendly image Kannapolis leaders have tried to cultivate in the past several years. "Each one of us on this council ran on a platform that we wanted to encourage economic development," said Mayor Pro Tem Bob Misenheimer, who joined Councilman Richard Anderson in voting against the tax. Misenheimer criticized the timing of the new tax -- when the number of new and expanding businesses in the county is already declining -- and because the council approved it without soliciting comment from businesses. He also found it troubling that the city could require a business owner to submit a sworn statement concerning the finances on which the tax is based. "Aren't we going pretty far?" he asked. "Isn't that big brother looking over our shoulder?"

Under the ordinance, many business owners would pay an annual tax based the prior year's gross receipts. Base fees will be \$30 annually for retailers with gross receipts up to \$10,000 and \$50 for wholesalers whose gross receipts total \$50,000 or less. The tax increases with receipts, with a maximum possible tax of \$2,000. **Mahaney** said the average business will pay about \$35 annually. While Anderson and Misenheimer said they'd heard from business owners who feared hardship caused by the tax, other councilmen said the amounts are minimal and shouldn't ruin anyone's bottom line. "This is not going to run anybody away from business," Councilman Ken Geathers said. "Businessmen know what their expenses are, and they can deal with it." A multitude of businesses and occupations won't be subject to the gross receipts calculations because they already pay annual fees to the state or the state sets a flat fee the city may charge. And that's not fair, said John Cox, chief executive officer of the Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce.

While the chamber is an advocate of business and, Cox stressed, opposes any new taxes on business, he said the state system that Kannapolis must use to tax is archaic and should be rewritten. "It would be nice for it to be equitable -- if they have to have one," he said. Cox said he doubts that the new business license will do much more to help Kannapolis get a fix on new businesses than the city could get by consulting the Economic Development Commission, which

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Michael Mahaney

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

keeps a list of them. But city officials say there have been new businesses in the city that go unnoticed at first, such as bingo parlors and a teen dance club that moved into vacant buildings. "In some cases that gets missed, frankly," Assistant City Manager Mike Legg said. "Somebody gets into a building and starts a business before anyone knows."

The city will send letters to businesses required to register for the license tax, **Mahaney** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Charlotte Observer, The (NC)
February 10, 2002

WILL POLICE STATION INCLUDE CITY HALL? - NEW CITY MANAGER URGES COUNCIL TO MAKE MOVE, BUT MEMBERS ARE WARY

Author/Byline: RICHARD RUBIN

City Council members pushed Friday for quick work on designing a long-discussed new police station but said they were wary of taking the new city manager's more aggressive suggestion to add a new city hall. A study completed last year recommended significant increases in space for both the city offices and the police department. The study proposed two buildings on the six-acre downtown site that currently contains the U.S. Post Office. "I think we need to take a serious look at this and decide what we want to do," council member Bob Misenheimer said during the council's annual retreat at Pity's Sake Lodge. "If we sit on our hands, we'll be sitting on our hands with this the same time next year."

New City Manager **Michael Mahaney** urged the council to act quickly and take advantage of low interest rates. If the full \$25 million project were financed with 30-year general obligation bonds, he said, the property tax rate would increase by about 6 cents per \$100 of assessed value. **Mahaney** said the buildings would improve the city's image and help spur economic development. "I recognize I've only been here six days, but I think y'all ought to give serious consideration to biting the bullet," he said. "This sends a significant signal to your citizens, to the area, really statewide, hey, these guys are on the move, things are happening there. It all depends on how much risk you want to take."

The main city offices are now in a storefront on Oak Avenue; the police department rents two buildings on Main Street. Over the next 20 years, the report said, the police department will need nearly 44,000 square feet - more than five times its current space. "The space needs are really critical, and it will only get worse over time," said Police Chief Paul Brown. The police station alone is expected to cost \$10.6 million and could be built without general-obligation bonds, which require a public vote.

Council member Paul Bessent echoed **Mahaney's** point about interest rates, saying the downturn in the economy provides an opportunity. "To do nothing now, I think, is the wrong thing to do," he said. Although the city needs to take a serious look at building a police station, council member Ken Geathers said, \$25 million is probably too much for Kannapolis right now. He suggested building the police station in phases, first creating enough space for the next 10 years and then adding later. But Brown cautioned against that approach, saying officers would work most effectively in the building as sketched. Brown also said the site might be too small to fit both a city hall and a police station, and council members urged the staff to examine other possible sites.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Salisbury Post
February 7, 2002

County considers lawsuit in wake of Easley withholding funds

By Jessie Burchette & Mark Wineka

Salisbury city government faces a revenue loss of close to \$1.7 million as officials here joined other municipal leaders in the state today in saying they were blindsided by some of Gov. Mike Easley's emergency budget cuts. Meanwhile, the chairman of the Rowan County Board of Commissioners would like to take Easley to court, Steve Blount, who also serves as a district director for the N.C. Association of County Commissioners, is requesting legal action.

Easley acted Tuesday to hold back revenue from counties and municipalities across the state. Rowan County will lose \$1.2 million from reimbursements and will be forced to spend \$300,000 more to pay for overspending in mandated Medicaid coverage. County Manager Tim Russell acted Tuesday evening to immediately freeze all hiring and ask all departments to cut their budgets 5 percent. Several capital projects may also be delayed.

Salisbury City Manager David Treme took similar action Wednesday, freezing all open or new positions, capital expenditures and special projects. In an e-mail to Ron Aycok, executive director of the association, Blount said the action by Easley is a breach of contract. "... Gov. Easley should at least be held accountable for this breach of faith to the counties of North Carolina. ... Can we take legal action to force the Governor to release these promised funds to the counties?" For much of the current fiscal year, which began July 1, 2001, Salisbury city management had been anticipating that Easley might once again withhold \$519,513 worth of reimbursements to the city, as he had done in the previous fiscal year. "Obviously, we didn't anticipate it being triple that," Salisbury Finance Director John Sofley said.

Easley's measures Tuesday also included holding back two payments (out of four) to the city of their utility tax reimbursements. The two utility tax payments amount to \$1,047,241. The state also will keep beer and wine tax payments of \$120,931. In all, the state will withhold \$1,687,785 from expected city of Salisbury revenues. "The hit for us is much more drastic than the hit to the counties, as far as our budgets," Sofley said, adding Salisbury's management team is evaluating its options to get through the rest of the year. If Salisbury had to make up the loss of that money just on its property tax rate, it would cost the city more than 9 cents per \$100 valuation.

Kannapolis officials have estimated they could lose up to \$945,000 in state-shared taxes and reimbursements this fiscal year. That amounts to 5 percent of the city's general fund budget. City Manager **Mike Mahaney** convened an emergency department heads meeting this morning to discuss the potential shortfall and possible solutions. "It's not the end of the world," said **Mahaney**, who started his job as the city's new city manager just last week. He said city government is "trying to be proactive and aggressive" and he's asking every department to "tighten their belt." **Mahaney** has directed department heads to study their budgets for a 5-percent reduction to each and to come back by 3 p.m. today with suggestions. Those cuts could

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Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

include freezing some vacant city positions or delaying capital projects, he said. The City Council could discuss the state withholdings at its annual budget retreat Friday.

Blount also contacted state Sen. Cal Cunningham of Lexington, who responded that he is outraged by the action. The Democrat wrote that "breach of contract is an apt analogy" but added that the State Constitution protects Easley. Cunningham pointed out that Easley had frozen \$1.3 billion in revenue to cover a shortfall of \$900 million, adding, "Why the over freeze?" He agreed the leadership in the General Assembly accepted rosy revenue projections and would not revise the figures downward. Cunningham called for a reinventing of state government using a panel of state leaders to review state priorities and make necessary adjustments.

Commissioner Arnold Chamberlain expressed his frustration by sending a red e-mail to various officials, supporting Blount. "... It is a moral and fiscal misjudgment to balance the state budget on the counties' backs once again," it said. Blount said Rowan commissioners won't pass the problem to county taxpayers. He vowed that there will be no tax increase, but all county departments should be ready for a very lean year. "The best we can do is tread water and hope the governor shifts his gunsights somewhere else," said Blount. Blount and Russell met with all county department heads Wednesday afternoon. Department heads will decide where to make cuts in their departments. As a result of cuts to the county, the Rowan-Salisbury Schools will lose \$500,000.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
January 25, 2002

Top city official to resign Manager quits in St. Marys

Author/Byline: Gordon Jackson

Mike Mahaney, St. Marys city manager since 1990, announced yesterday he plans to resign. The resignation comes less than a month after a new mayor and three City Council members took office. In a brief written statement, **Mahaney** said he felt it was "time to move on," from the job he held almost 12 years.

Mahaney said he will leave his post once a mutually agreeable date is decided upon with the council. Although his contract requires a 90-day notice, **Mahaney** said he would ask the council to waive that so he could leave immediately. **Mahaney** said it was a "difficult decision" to resign but he had several job offers he was considering and would announce a decision on his plans "in the near future."

During **Mahaney's** tenure, he helped get the city out of more than \$1 million in debt and reduced property taxes by half during that time, former Mayor Jerry Brandon said. "St. Marys is losing a good man," Brandon said. "I hate to see him go. He's been a real asset to the city."

None of the new council members or Mayor Deborah Hase could be reached for comment. They defeated incumbents who were highly criticized for approving an annexation despite objections.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Charlotte Observer, The (NC)
January 22, 2002

**NEW MANAGER EYES ROADS TO PROSPERITY - MICHAEL MAHANEY
OVERSAW SUCCESSES IN ST. MARYS, GA.**

Author/Byline: GAIL SMITH-ARRANTS

Kannapolis' new city manager knows the city's problems where the running shoes meet the road. Kannapolis City Council members voted unanimously Monday to hire **Michael Mahaney**, 51, who had jogged on Kannapolis streets to see traffic problems first-hand. "He saw the problems on Trinity Church Road and Boy Scout Camp Road," said council member Bob Misenheimer. "He did his homework."

Council members say **Mahaney**, a registered engineer and city manager of St. Marys, Ga., is strong everywhere they need him to be: in growth and economic development, as well as in water and sewer issues. Kannapolis, a city of about 37,000 with a textile manufacturing history, has been without a city manager since David Hales left last fall to become city manager in Bend, Ore. Assistant city manager Mike Legg has been interim city manager.

While he was running the Kannapolis roads, **Mahaney** said, he also saw a key challenge: commuters leaving in the morning for jobs in Charlotte. "On Boy Camp Scout Road at 6 in the morning, you can see car after car after car jump on I-85 to go work in Charlotte," **Mahaney** said Monday in a telephone interview from Georgia. Kannapolis has potential to attract new jobs, so it can keep more revenue at home, he said. "That's what we were able to do in St. Marys," said **Mahaney**, who has 25 years of experience in municipal government. "I see the same kind of potential in Kannapolis."

St. Marys hates to lose **Mahaney**, said Mayor Jerry Brandon, who has known him since **Mahaney** arrived there in 1990. The city of 15,000 was rated at the top of a 1996 Money magazine list of America's "50 Hottest Little Boomtowns." Brandon said **Mahaney** had a lot to do with the city's revival, from lowering property taxes and stabilizing finances to jump-starting development on the waterfront along the St. Marys River. "We have now become a place people want to come to live," Brandon said.

In Kannapolis, **Mahaney** will make \$95,000 a year, plus deferred compensation for retirement, and receive an automobile allowance of \$500 a month. **Mahaney** said the move to Kannapolis will allow him and his wife, Trish, to be closer to their son, who lives in Cary. They also have other family members in the Carolinas, he said, and Kannapolis is centrally located.

The new manager was one of 87 applicants from 25 states. He is expected to begin work by April 27.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
December 1, 2000

St. Marys OKs property tax hike Homeowners will see 30% increase, not 40%

Author/Byline: Gordon Jackson

Property taxes are going up in St. Marys -- but not as much as the City Council had originally planned. City Council members decided Wednesday to raise the city tax rate to \$6.50 per every \$1,000 of assessed value -- an increase of \$1.50, meaning homeowners will see a 30 percent increase in taxes instead of 40 percent. Funds produced by the higher tax rate will pay for a \$100,000 renovation of the new city police station, provide \$240,000 to purchase 10 new police cars and fund a \$164,000 study of city salaries to make wages competitive with the private sector and prevent the loss of trained city employees, City Manager **Mike Mahaney** said. "We'll still be able to do everything we had in the budget," **Mahaney** said.

Prior to the meeting, council members indicated they wanted a rate of 7 mills. But following discussion in the meeting, which included comments from audience members, the council approved the 6.5 mill rate. A mill produces \$1 in tax revenue for every \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Georgia residential property owners are assessed on 40 percent of the market value of their property. The owner of a \$100,000 house will pay \$260 a year in city taxes, a \$60 increase from the 1999-2000 fiscal year that ended June 30. Bills reflecting the increase could be sent to homeowners as soon as next week, city officials said.

Mayor Jerry Brandon said comments made by the public at three hearings to discuss the tax hike convinced council members to adopt the lower millage rate. "I think there were some valid points made, and we took those into consideration," Brandon said. "We talked about what we could have and what we could live without." Fewer than 20 people attended a public hearing prior to the vote, and only three of those spoke to council members about the proposed tax hike. Former city employee Deborah Hase said if the city was more aggressive collecting back taxes, an increase might not be necessary. "I think you have a substantial amount [owed]," Hase said.

Mahaney said there weren't enough delinquent taxes owed to eliminate the need to raise taxes. **Mahaney** described the city's tax collection rate as "phenomenal." During the past fiscal year from 1999-2000, **Mahaney** said the city collected \$843,000 in taxes and had only \$27,000 in uncollected taxes. City records show a total of about \$90,000 in uncollected taxes dating back to 1987. Former city council member Kyle Lewis accused the city of "wasteful spending," pointing out that taxes have increase 3 mills over the past two years. But in 1990, residents paid more than twice as much -- 13.5 mills -- as the rate set Wednesday, city officials said. **Mahaney** said the half-mill reduction will not affect planned city projects. The estimated \$130,000 that would have been generated from a half-mill tax was slated for a contingency fund. "We will not have quite as much money for emergencies," **Mahaney** said. "Quite frankly, they probably wouldn't have spent it."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
July 29, 2000

Tax lawsuit threatens Camden St. Marys, Kingland say they'll sue county for \$1.6 million surplus

Author/Byline: Gordon Jackson

Two cities are threatening to sue Camden County if a dispute about how revenues from a 1-cent sales tax were distributed aren't resolved. St. Marys took the first step toward a lawsuit Thursday by filing notification of a pending lawsuit against the county. Kingsland officials followed suit yesterday by filing a similar notice. Under state law, a minimum 30-day notice must be given before a local government can be sued. Both cities cite a July 10 ruling in a Carroll County case, where the state Supreme Court ruled revenues from local 1-cent sales taxes can be collected until the time period specified in the referendum expires. The cities say Camden County commissioners should not have withheld \$1.6 million that was collected until Dec. 31, when a 1994 referendum approved by voters expired. The cities want their share of the money that county commissioners voted to return to county residents by rolling back property taxes this year.

County commissioners, however, argued the referendum earmarked exactly \$20 million for projects such as roads, recreation and building improvements. Because the tax generated \$21.6 million, county commissioners said they were obligated to return the additional money raised to the taxpayers. "This is the most ludicrous thing I've ever heard," County Commission Chairman Bob Becker said. "We did exactly what the law calls for." County Administrator Barry King said the threatened lawsuit was a "bizarre interpretation" of the law and a "calculatingly cruel move against the citizenry." The \$1.6 million has already been returned to Camden County residents. King said the county would have to raise property taxes, including that of Kingsland and St. Marys residents, to pay the cities if the lawsuits are successful.

Steve Berry, an attorney representing the county in the dispute, said the cities are wrong to cite the recent Supreme Court case, which he said couldn't be compared with the issues in Camden County. In the Carroll County case, Berry said, the county kept additional revenues with no plans to share the money with the cities. But in Camden County, all residents benefited because of the countywide property tax rollback. "They want us to raise taxes to pay them back. It's crazy," Berry said. "Who would be in favor of that?"

St. Marys City Manager **Mike Mahaney** said the county's decision put the city in a financial bind because it planned to use its share of the additional money raised -- about \$600,000 -- for a waterfront development project. "We had to make some budgetary adjustments because of the county," **Mahaney** said. Some of those adjustments included cutbacks in the waterfront development, **Mahaney** said. The city has applied for state and federal grants to help offset the money it was counting on from the county, **Mahaney** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Kingsland Mayor Keith Dixon said city officials planned to sue the county even before the Supreme Court ruling and he feels confident the court would support the cities' contention. "The whole thing is that [tax] was legal," Dixon said. "I don't understand why they're [commissioners] doing this. They are hurting everyone in Camden County."

The \$20 million was divided between the cities and county, with St. Marys getting about \$5.8 million, Kingsland getting about \$4.1 million, Woodbine getting \$1.4 million and the county getting about \$8.7 million.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
September 11, 1998

Parties settle sex bias suit Agreement ends St. Marys case

Author/Byline: Gordon Jackson

A sexual discrimination lawsuit against St. Marys was settled out of court this week, just before the trial was set to begin in U.S. District Court in Brunswick. The terms of the settlement were not released because of a court order made at the request of both sides in the dispute, said Donna L. Crossland, a Brunswick attorney representing the city. "The parties agreed the terms would be confidential," Crossland said. "We would be in contempt of court to talk about the settlement. I think everyone is satisfied." While details of the settlement were not revealed, one fact is clear: Patricia Smith, one of the women who sued the city, is no longer an employee. Smith resigned from her job in the utilities accounts department Wednesday after the settlement, according to a city switchboard operator. Another former employee suing the city, Teresa Smith, was fired from her position as utilities accounts administrator in May after she tried to get the city to pay her for taking two days off work to file depositions in the lawsuit. The women, who are not related, said in the lawsuit that they were discriminated against in retaliation for a grievance filed against City Manager **Mike Mahaney** in April 1995. Neither woman could be reached yesterday for comment. The lawsuit contended that **Mahaney** and Mayor Jerry Brandon "embarked on a campaign of retaliation, harassment, intimidation and discrimination" against the women after the grievance was filed. They said city officials made publicly critical statements against them and they were not given pay raises comparable to other employees in similar positions. The women were asking for back pay for the difference in what they actually earned and what they would have earned, compensatory damages for humiliation and emotional distress and for punitive damages against Brandon and **Mahaney**. **Mahaney** was given a written reprimand by the St. Marys City Council on Sept. 11, 1995, in response to the women's complaint. And the grievances filed by the women with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission were dropped later that year. Both **Mahaney** and Brandon said they could not give details about the settlement. "Clearly," Brandon said, "we're glad this is behind us."

FIRING UPHELD

A three-person appeals board this week upheld the firing of Teresa Smith, utilities accounts administrator for St. Marys. The board, appointed by the City Council, also upheld the two-day suspension without pay of Patricia Smith, who also worked in the utilities accounts department. During hearings last week, both women were accused of trying to get the city to pay them for taking two days off work to file depositions for a federal lawsuit they filed against the city claiming sexual discrimination on the job. City Manager **Mike Mahaney** argued during the hearings that Teresa Smith, as a department head, should have known the city's personal leave policy when she tried to get compensated for taking the time off work and when she approved the time off for Patricia Smith. The board's decision cannot be appealed, according to city policy.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL)
March 14, 1996

St. Marys No. 1 Picked best small 'boom town'

Author/Byline: Gordon Jackson

St. Marys is best known as the gateway to Cumberland Island and home to Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, but all that will change Monday when the April edition of Money magazine hits the newsstands. That's when an estimated 10 million readers nationwide will learn St. Marys ranks as the No. 1 small "boom town" in the country, a magazine spokeswoman said yesterday.

City Manager **Mike Mahaney** said he expected the city to receive a good ranking, but magazine officials wouldn't tell him how the city rated. He first learned the news yesterday after a call from the Times-Union. "I'm really excited and think it's great publicity for the city," **Mahaney** said. "I knew we had a lot going for us being so close to the Atlantic and Jacksonville, but I had no idea we'd be No. 1."

The Money story identifies St. Marys as a "sleepy Georgia seacoast town" that "offers a beguiling mix of natural beauty, lovingly preserved historic buildings and a steadily expanding economy, owing chiefly to 18-year-old Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base."

The magazine hired two consulting firms to determine the top 50 small boom towns in the country, said Patti Straus, a Money spokeswoman. The criteria for cities considered for the list include:

Non-metropolitan populations of 10,000 to 50,000.

Median household income of at least 23 percent above the national non-metro median of \$22,483.

At least 17 percent of residents employed in executive, professional, managerial or technical jobs.

At least 44 percent of all household heads are 45 years old or younger the national average.

Population growth from 1990 to 1995.

Money magazine officials interviewed more than 200 regional economic development experts, local politicians, chamber of commerce officials, school administrators and residents before making their final selections, Straus said.

St. Marys has ranked as one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation since 1979 when the Navy decided to build a Trident submarine base there. The city's population has skyrocketed to 23,702 a 51 percent increase since 1990, according to the Money story. Mayor Jerry Brandon talked yesterday about how the city has cope with growth since 1979. He said that city officials worked

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

with the federal government to determine what impact the submarine base would have in St. Marys in terms of housing, infrastructure, schools and other things. "We had pretty good idea what to expect," he said.

Both he and **Mahaney** said the article will likely help Camden County in general and, in particular, the city's plans for economic development and attracting professional workers who want the best of smalltown life, combined with good wages. "I've always known St. Marys was a great place to live or I wouldn't be here," **Mahaney** said.

Janet Brinko, St. Marys tourism director, predicted the city would receive an unexpected rush of visitors this summer when people worldwide attend the 1996 Olympic Games. "I think this is the most fabulous opportunity," Brinko said. "It's the best free advertisement anyone could ever expect to get for our city."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Ledger-Enquirer (Columbus, GA)
November 16, 1995

COUNCIL VOTES TO ELIMINATE NEW ST. MARYS' DISTRICT

Author/Byline: Associated Press

It took just one election for outraged voters and the City Council to agree that St. Marys' new minority voting district should be abolished. Two residents have sued the city, saying the minority district violates their voting rights by barring them from voting for at-large council seats. And the council voted unanimously Monday to dump the new district. The council's decision requires approval by the Legislature and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Implementation of the new district, which is 52 percent black, failed to produce any black candidates for the Nov. 7 municipal elections. A white candidate ran unopposed in the district. Abolishing the minority district would return the city to six council members elected at-large, meaning every city voter would vote in every council race. Under current law, the minority district's 821 voters may vote only for a candidate in that district. Voters living outside the district may vote for up to five council members, but not for candidates in the minority district.

City Manager **Mike Mahaney** said the city essentially has two council districts, one with one representative and one with five. The voting setup is unlike any other in Georgia, said Linda Meggers, director of redistricting for the General Assembly. There are currently no black council members in St. Marys, and the candidates for the two contested seats in the Nov. 21 runoff are white. Residents in the minority district are barred from voting for them because the seats are outside the district.

NAACP officials said Tuesday they were upset that Mayor Jerry Brandon said their organization approved the minority-district plan after it was conceived in 1992. "We were in no way privy to the city's discussion on the district plan and we in no way endorsed that plan as it currently exists," said Mary Jane Stevens, president of the Camden County branch of the NAACP.

Brandon said he assumed the organization had known about the plan because former council member Gerald Roberts, who is black, was aware of it. Roberts said he has no problems with the council's action Monday. "My concern is that the majority of people in that area will be satisfied," he said. Brandon said the council first began forming the district in 1992, when Roberts decided not to seek re-election. The city advertised the proposed change and held several public meetings on the issue, but no one attended, he said. The Legislature and the Justice Department both approved the plan.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Michael Mahaney
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA)
May 24, 1990

Georgia newsbriefs

Mike Mahaney, who started work Monday as the city manager in St. Marys, is hoping the City Council will vote officially to hire him. The council decided during two closed meetings to hire Mr. **Mahaney** but never took a public vote, as required by law. Council member Jerry Brandon said the lack of a public vote May 14 was "an oversight."

Compiled by: Sarah Linares
Colin Baenziger & Associates



Section 8

W. Lee Smith

*Fernandina Beach City Manager
Candidate Report*

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Cover Letter and Resume



William "Lee" Smith, III

29 Lake Shore Blvd.
Port Wentworth, GA 31407

Phone: 912-328-9492

Email: wlsmanager@outlook.com

July 16th, 2024

Colin Baenziger, Colin Baenziger & Associates

Mr. Baenziger,

I am writing to express my interest in the Fernandina Beach, Florida – City Manager position as shown on your website. My (35+) thirty-five plus years of solid experience in North Carolina and Georgia local governments and county management, coupled with my passion for city and county operations appear to align with every aspect of city services and operations such as finance, public works, emergency management, sanitation, recreation, community involvement, planning, zoning, water, sewer, drainage, capital construction management as well as economic development and recruitment. I have overseen staff levels from 200 to 2250 and I feel I am the perfect candidate for this position.

As my resume demonstrates, I have been developing my skills as a local government manager over the past thirty-five years. My management and public skills are outstanding, as are my abilities to bring communities together. I have also demonstrated proficiency in Management, receiving my ICMA Credentialed Manager status years ago. I have developed and implemented 911/communication systems, major capital projects including but not limited to: roads, bridges, water, sewer, broadband, multi-purpose stadium, etc. All within or under budget. Have successfully developed a team concept for employees several times. Have major experience managing emergency events such as major storms, fires and chemical spills with pre-planning and post event management. It would be my pleasure to contribute similar results for the City of Fernandina Beach.

I am very interested in joining the Fernandina Beach team and look forward to discussing the opportunities Fernandina has to offer. I look forward to an opportunity to be considered and hereby request the opportunity to interview and be considered for this position. I would be glad to talk or meet with you and/or the Board when appropriate.

Sincerely,

Lee Smith

William "Lee" Smith, III

Enclosure: Resume, References, Salary History

WILLIAM "LEE" SMITH, III

29 Lake Shore Blvd. Port Wentworth, GA 31407
912-328-9492 • wlsmanager@outlook.com

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a challenging leadership position applying creative problem solving and innovative management skills with a growing county, city & community to achieve optimum utilization of local resources along with my 35+ years of local government experience. Always keeping in mind "To leave where you are better than when you found it."

EXPERIENCE

County Manager

May 2014 to September 2022

Chatham County, Savannah, GA

Served as Chatham County Manager, Georgia. Served a nine-member board, responsible for 2,250+ employees, served a community with a population of approximately 300,000 people in the county and regionally over 500,000 people with an annual growth rate of 17%. Was responsible for a \$998 million budget, development of a "zero based" budget process, developed local policy and laws for the Board and carried out and implemented these activities per the Board's priorities and direction. Developed a professional executive team whereby departments were divided into groups for each deputy manager and myself within the organization for appropriate reporting and supervision of specific areas such as public works, law enforcement, building/safety, code enforcement, judicial, finance, etc.

I was successful in establishing a new county police department with the mindset of "real" community policing. Successfully consolidated communications/E-911 system that had operated individually under seven municipalities to one system. Managed several financial referendums for projects such as infrastructure, new trial courthouse, new state of the art emergency operations center and multiple major recreation facilities. Initiated a strategic planning process involving several thousand citizens which ultimately brought forth the "Chatham County Blueprint for the future." Stabilized the finances of the County which lead to a higher bond rating reducing financing costs of major capital projects.

Managed the development of the Chatham County SPLOST (Special Local Option Sales Tax) of \$400 million for roads, recreation, capital and infrastructure. Several of the projects are now under construction.

County Manager/Chief Executive Officer

December 2001 to February 2014

Wayne County, Goldsboro, NC

I was responsible for all aspects of operations and finances for Wayne County, NC. These responsibilities included but were not limited to: Budget development and presentation, financial planning, strategic community planning, development of a executive team to oversee day to day operations, answer to a seven member elected board, develop board policies and recommendations. Operations included: health and human services, finance, tax, emergency services, solid waste, sewer, law enforcement, etc. Developed the county's first capital improvement plan and was instrumental in developing a public-private economic development agency recruiting over 2000 jobs in five years. \$175 Million Annual Budget & 1100+ employees. Managed the re-organization of the local airport to an executive jetport and merged a regional public library system to a county department for better oversight. Managed the development of a county-wide digital communication system including all county operations and law enforcement and all municipalities. Implemented a new county-wide emergency medical system 24-hour paramedics from a volunteer system at a cost reduction to taxpayers including a state-of-the-art E911 system.

County Manager

July 1993 to November 2001

Washington County, Plymouth, NC

Served as County Manager. Responsible for all aspects of operations and budget of \$12+ million annually, answered to a five-member board. Operation responsibilities included: budget development and oversight, tax, finance, health and human services, personnel, water, etc. Developed the county's water system to a true self-supporting enterprise, developed the county's first zoning ordinance, established the first county wide transportation system and served for several months as both county manager and hospital administrator while transitioning the local hospital to a private entity and first profit in 10 years.

Executive Director

December 1990 to June 1993

Columbus County Economic Development Commission, Whiteville, NC

As executive director was responsible for the recruitment and retention of all industry in the county as well the development and oversight of an 1100-acre industrial park. This effort included: marketing for the county/city, extensive travel in the US and Europe. I was also responsible for the development of the first industrial park with all infrastructure including water, sewer, gas, rail, and interstate connection. This job created over 1,600 new jobs and millions of dollars in new tax base. I was also given the opportunity to manage a water bond referendum (successful) and project implementation.

Planner/Emergency Manager/Deputy Manager

March 1986 to November 1990

Pamlico County, Bayboro, NC

This position was responsible for: all emergency response (fire and rescue), preparedness, developed and implemented the county's first 911 system, community development including federal housing programs, tourism, zoning, mapping, etc.

EDUCATION

University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, NC

1985 Bachelor of Science Business Administration (Cameron School of Business)

INTERESTS

Transportation - Involved in the development of a Highway 70 Corridor Commission to oversee the strategic corridor interstate project involving all of Eastern North Carolina including seven counties. The \$1.2 billion project was completed in 2015. Infrastructure - Heavily involved in regional water and sewer projects (infrastructure Summit 2008), etc. Actively involved in the Military Affairs Commission and Seymour Support Council for Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. Community - Have been majorly involved in Habitat for Humanity for over 20 years. The bulk of my time outside of the office is spent with my family and traveling. I am an avid gardener and wood worker and fly large kites at the beach on the weekends.

DISTINCTIONS

Recognized as County Manager of the Year for the Eastern Region in 2005 and Awarded Transportation Leadership Award in 2006. Certified/Accredited County Manager through ICMA since 2004. Chairman and Board member of the Year in 2012 by the North Carolina Mental Health Council. Received 30-year recognition as a member of ICMA. Manager of the Year 1999 by the Eastern NC Regional Commission.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Developed the Chatham County "Calling All Manager's Group" including all local county city and county managers in the region of southeast Georgia and South Carolina. Previously an active member of the North Carolina City/County Manager's Association and ICMA and continue these activities in Georgia. Have served on several committees for the Georgia and North Carolina Association of County Commissioners including the NCPTS, Curriculum development and Productivity Awards Committee. Serve as the local Wayne County Development Alliance as Secretary/Treasurer, Wayne County Chamber Board of Directors, Downtown Goldsboro Development Commission, Wayne County Partnership for Children, Past Board of Director member of the Wayne County United Way. Chair of Eastpointe Mental Health MCO and Chairman of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Mental Health Waiver Advisory Committee. Member/Secretary/Treasurer of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. Have continued as a major advocate of mental health in the State of Georgia.

SALARY HISTORY

Chatham County - \$253,500 plus \$1200 car allowance per month all insurances paid by the county including family benefits, 401k max contribution, life insurance, employment contract with one yr. severance & fully vested retirement 4%.

Wayne County - \$215,500 plus \$1200 travel per month, individual/family insurance coverage, 401K, life insurance and employment contract.

Washington County - \$95,000 plus \$500 travel per month and employment contract. Columbus County - \$43,000 plus \$500 travel per month

Candidate Introduction

WILLIAM “LEE” SMITH, III

EDUCATION

University of North Carolina – Wilmington – BS – Business Administration – Cameron School of Business

ICMA – Certified Accredited Manager – 20 years

EXPERIENCE

Management Consultant	Jan. 2023 – present
County Manager, Chatham County, Savannah, GA	2014 – 2023
County Manager, Wayne County, Goldsboro, NC	2001 – 2014
County Manager, Washington County, Plymouth, NC	1993 – 2001
Executive Director, Columbus Co. Econ. Dev. Comm., Whiteville, NC	1990 – 1993
County Emergency Mgmt. Dir./Deputy Mgr., Pamlico Co., Bayboro, NC	1986 – 1990

BACKGROUND

Chatham County has a population of 295,000. The County has 2,250 employees and I had direct oversight for 35 employees. The general fund budget was \$600M and the total budget was \$998M. The three most important issues facing Chatham County are:

1. Roadway & Bridges – due to the growth of the Savannah Georgia Ports along, Visitors and growing populations, traffic is increasing at rates over 18% a year with truck traffic being the greatest causing major damage to major highways, bridges, and secondary roads.
2. Workforce Development – with the new industries such Amazon, Hyundai, and many logistic centers, the need for skilled, pre-trained and educated individuals must be in place prior to new industry. At the present time, Chatham and surrounding counties are having to “catch-up” causing a strain the local technical and four year colleges.
3. Drainage – Chatham County averages 13 feet above sea level. The introduction of new industries, warehousing and new housing, the county drainage system is meeting capacity. Widening and deepening of canals, flood gates, and reservoirs are now required along with participation of developments to assist with reducing runoff and cost of improvements.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

Fernandina Beach caught my interest due to my 35 years of experience in coastal communities. My experience with emergency management dealing with hurricanes, chemical spills, drainage,

WILLIAM “LEE” SMITH, III

and continued growth regarding tourism matches the needs of the City. I have management skills and will offer Fernandina Beach a fresh look issues and opportunities.

My management style is one of team building and involving all levels of employees to be assessed regularly and be a part of developing solutions for county issues. I would sum it up and say my style involves participation and regular oversight of services and employees.

Staff would say that I am fair, I keep to my word, painfully honest, ethical and care about those I work with. Elected officials would say that I am honest, not a “yes” man, respectful, creative and a problem solver.

My strengths are that I am a consensus builder, strong community partner, strong work ethics and team builder. My weaknesses are that I can be impatient at times, can overload myself, sometimes not good at asking for assistance.

No one employee is the same; therefore, I have utilized a general appraisal methodology that measures effectiveness, attendance, work quality, etc. These are very numeric. The key to success is the annual development of a work plan for every employee. Whereby, all supervisors and department managers meet with employees to jointly review what they do well and where improvements are needed. At that point a jointly agreed upon plan is developed and understood so the employee comprehends the expectations and what is required to improve and know this plan must be adhered to. Last, employees should meet at least twice a year to discuss their successes and needed improvements. If we wait an entire year, we may set the employee up for failure of management does not recognize what is occurring until the issues are major.

My most recent achievement was the establishment of a new county police force in a six month period. The County and City of Savannah decided to part ways regarding police and the Commissioners gave me a budget and timeline of which both were met with an approximate \$3M reduction in police service but with higher service levels such as response times averaging 7 minutes or less. Most importantly we established a real “community” police force that talks with the businesses and citizens, participates in community events even on their own time and are seen as allies not enemies.

My biggest failure was in Wayne County, NC. The County developed and initiated an automated payroll system. BETA testing had small glitches; however, when the system went “live” major errors occurred causing major overpayments to employees. We utilized a third party company to aid in the transition. I believe my failure depended too much on the third party, not bringing my team together more closely and listening to their concerns. I have since, with projects of that magnitude, utilized a project manager to keep the process moving and keeping me informed of issues and progress.

Unfortunately, I have fired several people during my career for various reasons including but not limited to theft, disorderly conduct, inability to do the job properly, and bringing about an unsafe work environment. The firing of someone should be no surprise to them if management and

WILLIAM “LEE” SMITH, III

supervisors have been paying attention to issues and counseling the employee. Unless the infraction was great enough to warrant immediate termination, then the process of adhering to HR policies of progressive must be adhered to. It is never easy to terminate someone, but I have always approached these issues with complete data and documentation. Terminations must be done face to face in a safe environment with witnesses. Last, I try to keep my emotion out of the process; however, that is nearly impossible. Though the individual indeed must be terminated, I cannot help but think of the impact to the individual and families as well as the department of which the individual worked.

The challenges for the City Manager for Fernandina Beach are as follows. First, as with starting any new position, it is getting to know the team, how they work and understanding what the county priorities of the Board are. Specifically, team building with staff, capital projects regarding roadways and equitable recreation amenities, commercial growth and drainage issues throughout the city, sea level rise and impacts on beaches.

My first six months if hired:

1. 30 days - Get to know the management team as a group and as individuals, meet with board members to see as a board where my attention should place per their priorities. Also, meet with members to get a feel for processes, proper and preferred communication processes, and frequency. Budget review with team.
2. 60 - review strategic plans and ordinances, continue to travel the county to inspect buildings, assets, problem areas, etc.
3. 90 – meet with community leaders to get a feel for what the concerns of community are to incorporate into my work plans while being sensitive to problematic issues.
4. 120 – at this point manager should have a sense of the culture of the community, regular community meetings should be scheduled, personally should somewhat engrained in the county, need for formal community sessions to see where the county stands with projects and general concerns and if the board chooses to hold work sessions and education session with the Board for the next six months and up to 5 years forward.

I have excellent relationships with the media as I regularly communicate with them, am always honest and forthright (except in cases of litigation details, personnel, etc.). There is nothing in my background that would embarrass the county.

I have initiated utilization of social media platforms for public education, getting the facts out, notices, giving regular video updates and short sessions to stay ahead of community concerns. Also, there must be someone or a department that monitors all these platforms to keep the Board and management informed of trends, both positive and negative.

There are no community activists that will contact my next employer.

In my leisure time I spend time with my family, kayaking, concerts, festivals, travel and cook (taught by some of the best southern cooks), like to volunteer occasionally with Habitat for Humanity and Food Bank.

WILLIAM “LEE” SMITH, III

SIX ADJECTIVES OR PHRASES YOU WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF

Results-oriented, engaged, ambitious, diligent, passionate, analytical.

REASON FOR WANTING TO LEAVE MOST RECENT JOB

Fairly new board that were seeking a different direction for the county. There were a couple of highly intense projects which caused rifts among members and ultimately communication broke down which impacted administration. We negotiated a severance agreement, and I resigned Jan. 3rd of this year. I have no regrets or hard feelings with/towards the county.

CURRENT/MOST RECENT OR RELEVANT SALARY

\$253,000 plus vehicle allowance and benefits

Section 8

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
WILLIAM LEE SMITH III**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County	
Chatham County, GA	No Records Found
Wayne County, NC	No Records Found
State	
Georgia	No Records Found
North Carolina	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County	
Chatham County, GA	No Records Found
Wayne County, NC	No Records Found
Federal	
Georgia	No Records Found
North Carolina	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

Georgia	No Records Found
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Credit	Overall, very good
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Personal Bankruptcy	No Records Found
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Sex Offender Registry	Not Listed
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Education	Confirmed
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Employment	Confirmed
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Social Media	Nothing of Concern Found
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**Background Check Summary for
WILLIAM LEE SMITH III**

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
WILLIAM LEE SMITH III
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: William Lee Smith III

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes ☐ No ☒
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes ☐ No ☒
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes ☐ No ☒
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes ☐ No ☒
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes ☐ No ☒
6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated, driving under the influence, operating a vehicle impaired, or a similar offense?
Yes ☐ No ☒
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes ☐ No ☒
8. Please list all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one. Instagram and Facebook
9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes ☐ No ☒
10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

Attested to: William Lee Smith, III
Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via PDF DOCUMENT to monique@cb-asso.com or via fax to
(561) 621-5965 no later than 5:00 PM MST 06/24/2024

(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

CB&A Reference Notes

**Reference Notes
William “Lee” Smith**

Wilbur Andy Anderson – Former Commissioner, Wayne County, NC 919-344-1202

Mr. Anderson was elected to the County Commission in 1993. He met Mr. Smith in 2001 and they worked together until Mr. Anderson retired in 2012. His comments are based on Mr. Smith’s job performance during the time that they worked together.

Mr. Smith was one of the best County Managers Mr. Anderson has ever known. Mr. Anderson was the odd man politically (meaning, the other Commissioners belonged to a different political party). Mr. Smith always made sure Mr. Anderson was aware of anything that happened, and he treated all the Commissioners equally. He was very honest and above board.

During the interview process the hiring panel stated that Mr. Smith was the best Manager they found. He did his homework and arrived at Wayne County extremely knowledgeable of their government. He worked well with others, worked overtime to complete projects, and brought several businesses to the community. He had a good knowledge of finance. Anyone creating a team always asked Mr. Smith to be part of the group because of his expertise.

Because Mr. Smith had a great deal of foresight on what was coming, he advised the Commission well on how to budget and manage their resources. He was active in securing funding from state agencies. The County owned a small airport. He wanted to show the public that the airport was something special. He formed a team to create a name and logo for the airport and was very proactive in advertising it. He successfully applied for grant monies to install a LED light system in the airport, they were one of only three airports at the time to have this ultra-modern lighting. The Wayne Executive Airport is one of the finest airports in North Carolina, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Smith.

Everyone hired by Mr. Smith was a good fit for the role and organization. He terminated the employment of individuals who were not meeting expectations. He is a go-getter and does not sit behind a desk. He is customer service oriented and stays on top of every issue. He advised the Commissioners well and they sought his recommendations on how to resolve issues. He generally completes assignments immediately, and he is always very timely.

Mr. Smith has not personally been involved in a controversial situation, but he was involved in controversial decisions made by the Commission. Nothing in his background would embarrass an employer. One of two of the new Commissioners at the time of his departure might disagree with this reference but they have a different management style and sought to make many changes within the organization.

Mr. Anderson was not on the Commission when Mr. Smith left and has no personal knowledge of what transpired. Due to an election the Commission went from having a majority of one political party to having a majority of the other political party. Mr. Anderson heard that the new Commissioners wanted a manager who belonged to their political party.

**Reference Notes
William “Lee” Smith**

Based on what Mr. Anderson knows, he would hire Mr. Smith and highly recommends him. He is a great Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Knowledgeable,
- Go-getter,
- Motivated,
- Gets along with people,
- Helpful, and
- Manager and director.

Strengths: Finance, management, proactive, accomplishes tasks, visionary, manages staff well, keeps things moving.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Jack Best – Former Commissioner, Wayne County, NC 919-920-9988

Mr. Best has known Mr. Smith since 2001 and worked with him as a County Commissioner for eight years.

Mr. Smith rated 95 of 100 on his review. He took a County that was cash poor and brought it to a very comfortable position. The County now pays cash for items like cars, equipment, and computers. He improved their bond rating and did a wonderful job handling the finances. He is his own man and has his own ideas. He knows how to get the job done and does well.

The only thing Mr. Best expects is to not have any surprises. Mr. Smith kept the Commissioners very well informed. He was willing to talk through the issues. Mr. Best did not always agree with Mr. Smith, but he was frequently right. They talked two to three times a week and attended Commission meetings every other week. Their interactions were always very good.

Mr. Smith made excellent decisions when hiring personnel. He was hands-on and he delegated authority. He improved the community during his tenure. He was innovative and he kept the organization functioning at a high level. He was not perfect when dealing with the public, but he had a good rapport with community leaders.

Mr. Smith put a team together from the staff, the County Commissioners, and residents to build a nice civics center. Residents complained about the project until it was completed, and they realized how beneficial it is. He wanted to build an animal shelter, but some Commissioners felt the cost was too high. Mr. Smith turned to the community and gathered donations equaling 10-20% of the necessary funding.

Reference Notes William “Lee” Smith

Mr. Smith is absolutely customer service oriented and a problem solver. He is very quick to complete tasks and he never procrastinates. He determines what needs to happen and does it.

The only controversy involving Mr. Smith occurred after an election. The new Board members were of a different political party than the Commissioners who had been on the Board for 100 years. The new Commissioners changed the entire focus of the organization. From day one they wanted to terminate Mr. Smith’s employment and hire a manager from their own political party. They kept him in place for a year, so they did not have to pay severance, and then parted ways. These Board members are the only individuals who might disagree with this reference.

Mr. Best would hire Mr. Smith tomorrow if he had a job available. Mr. Best likes Mr. Smith as a person and feels he is a great Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Very honest,
- Hardworking,
- Astute business person,
- Good financial manager,
- Manages employees well, and
- Did a wonderful job.

Strengths: Good financial manager, treats employees well and gets along with most of them, managed a large staff and a \$70 million dollar budget well, did an exceptional job.

Weaknesses: If he had any, it would be that he likes to do things his own way.

Dead Kicklighter – Commissioner, Chatham County, GA 912-507-1343

Mr. Kicklighter has worked with Mr. Smith since 2014. Mr. Smith was an excellent manager, and he did a great job for Chatham County. He was very intelligent, and he communicated well with staff and with the Commission. He made good decisions both when hiring and in general.

Mr. Smith was often out in the community. He was very personable, so he interacted well with residents. He provided the information they needed in a professional way. He kept the Board informed through phone calls and texts. When they requested information, he confirmed the request through email and then followed up with a hard copy of the data.

A previous Commission, prior to Mr. Kicklighter’s tenure on the Board which began in 2001, allowed a developer to build infrastructure that did not meet County standards with the understanding that the Homeowner’s Association (HOA) was to maintain the drainage system and the roads in certain areas. Decades later when the infrastructure started failing, the HOA

Reference Notes William “Lee” Smith

could not afford to replace it and the developer was long gone. Mr. Smith held meetings with staff and the HOA. He developed a public/private partnership in which the HOA contributed a substantial amount of money to bring the system up to code, and the County took control of roads and drainage in the area. He involved employees from all pertinent departments and helped right a wrong in the community.

Customer service is important to Mr. Smith. He has good financial skills, and he is good about completing tasks within the timeframe given. He responds to stress as well as anyone.

Anyone leading a large government body faces controversial issues, and Mr. Smith was no exception. He handled each scenario with dignity, respect, and dedication to the County and its employees. His background is clear of anything that would concern an employer. He does have detractors in the community, which is common for those in his position, but Mr. Kicklighter did not name anyone specifically.

Mr. Kicklighter would hire Mr. Smith. He will do a great job for any community fortunate enough to hire him. They will be satisfied with his job performance.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Intelligent,
- Thorough,
- Hard working,
- Compassionate, and
- Kind.

Strengths: Brings solutions to the table when presenting issues, leads in a way that the staff knows he means business but still well liked by them.

Weaknesses: As long as the elected officials clearly communicate what they want from Mr. Smith, they will have no issues with him.

Michael Kaigler – Assistant County Manager, Chatham County, GA 912-657-7080

Mr. Kaigler has known Mr. Smith since 2014. Mr. Kaigler is currently serving as the Interim Manager. Mr. Smith did a good job for Chatham County. He served in several capacities in North Carolina and worked well with the former Chairman.

Chatham County has a hiring system with interview panels, though the final decisions are typically made by Mr. Smith and his assistants. His decisions both in hiring and in general were good. His strongest trait is innovation, though he was asked to be more of a change agent in Chatham County as the previous manager had been in the role for more than two decades and the

Reference Notes

William “Lee” Smith

organization was significantly behind the times. While Mr. Smith did not attend all community meetings, he was always there when he was asked to be. He worked well with the public and many of the residents were sad to see him leave. He was good about keeping the leadership team informed and he involved them in the decision-making process.

Mr. Smith likes to be out front, rather than behind a desk. He walked through the departments and took random employees to lunch periodically to listen to their input. He coined the phrase they still use, which is “Team Chatham” and helped staff work cohesively as a team.

The County’s payroll system was antiquated, and Mr. Smith led the team to install new software. Employees who had worked for the County for years resisted the change, but he led the way and eventually they realized it was a better way to work. He also developed a customer service system where residents can submit their request for service or file a complaint. He ensured that every entry was always given a response, even when the County was not able to fill their request.

One skill Mr. Smith prides himself on is keeping up to date on the financial documentation and budget. He will take the information home and pour over it in his downtime. He coped very well in stressful situations. He internalizes some things but handles stress well.

Mr. Smith has not been involved in anything controversial. The Board changed after an election and a minority of the Board wanted things that were either not possible or were questionable from an ethics standpoint. Mr. Smith stood up to them, which eventually led to his departure. Also, following a long-term manager can be difficult and some in the community wanted the same leadership they had before, Mr. Smith’s style was different. Mr. Kaigler would hire Mr. Smith as he is an excellent manager. Employees who work for him have very positive things to say about him.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Caring,
- Outgoing,
- Sympathetic,
- Friendly,
- Decisive, and
- Outgoing.

Strengths: Very personable, very organized, works well with others, developed the County’s first strategic plan.

Weaknesses: Time management and perhaps his willingness to accommodate some elected officials.

Reference Notes William “Lee” Smith

Paula Krissler – Executive Director, Healthy Savannah, Savannah, GA 912-272-9494

Ms. Krissler met Mr. Smith shortly after he was hired in 2014 and she is honored to be one of his references. Healthy Savannah is entirely focused on policy and systems change which requires engagement with the City and County. They met on several occasions, and he attended their meetings. He did a great job. He was very supportive of their organization and accomplished amazing things for the County.

Decisions made by Mr. Smith are good. He was visible in the community. Their organization was known for handing out inexpensive plastic bicycle pins. Mr. Smith ensured that he always had one to show his engagement with the community. Healthy Savannah had over 200 public and private partners, and he engaged well with all of them. Ms. Krissler was surprised the first time Mr. Smith called her personally, he is very responsive. He faced both sides of any aisle and kept them equally informed. He was also good about sharing information when she was trying to understand a situation. He has a good perspective.

The grants they received for the Trail plan involved SPLOST funds, and it languished for over a decade at the County waiting for the required plans to be developed before they could move forward. Mr. Smith was an integral part of the process to create the plans and secure the matching federal dollars. The project finally moved forward through his efforts. This project was somewhat controversial because it involved neighborhoods and communities, but he was levelheaded and listened to all sides while keeping the project moving forward.

Controversy existed but Ms. Krissler stayed out of it. She does feel that the Commission tended to be less progressive than Mr. Smith is. That said, she was still shocked when Mr. Smith was suspended and does not know the reason why. She has spoken with others in the community, and they were just as surprised as she was, they just did not see any negatives in him. He handled the stress of the situation well. She is not aware of anything in Mr. Smith’s background that would be concerning to an employer.

Ms. Krissler would hire Mr. Smith, she felt he was a great manager for their community, and he was always very accessible.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Strong,
- Smart,
- Engaging,
- Community minded, and
- Organized.

Strengths: Courage, charisma, dependability, integrity, respect for others, and flexibility.

Weaknesses: None identified.

**Reference Notes
William “Lee” Smith**

Linda Cramer – Assistant County Manager, Chatham County, GA 912-433-7615

Ms. Cramer has known Mr. Smith since 2014. He led many different types of projects while working with elected officials on the Board as well as constitutional officers. Mr. Smith brought his experience from Wayne County to Chatham which was very helpful in resolving their issues. One of the first projects they worked together on was a strategic plan, which previous managers had avoided. He first met with constituents to learn of their vision for the community and then worked with staff and the elected officials to create a plan and move forward.

When hiring Mr. Smith made good decisions. He included department heads in the interview process and listened to their feedback but was responsible for the final hiring decision. His decisions in general were good. He was not afraid to implement change when it was needed if he could. Change is not always possible when working with constitutional officers. He really focused on the strategic plan and aligned the organization to develop processes around it. He was not afraid of confrontation; he handled it well while diffusing the situation.

Being out in the community was not Mr. Smith’s main responsibility. He created a public information office to relay some information. During the pandemic he led meetings on zoom. He worked well with the public in Commission meetings. He kept everyone informed to the extent appropriate as some matters were confidential.

The County police force was combined with the City of Savannah. While being very costly, they also noticed that officers spent all their time in the city and not in the unincorporated areas of the County. They decided to reestablish their own police department and worked together on it. Mr. Smith hired the Police Chief, brought over some of the officers from Savannah, and contracted with the Sheriff until they were fully staffed.

When residents had a complaint, they previously had to call the office. Mr. Smith implemented a citizen records management system so anyone can go online and submit service requests. This system reduced call volume and improved their capacity to track and respond to issues.

While Mr. Smith had good financial skills, that was not his focus. However, he worked for smaller counties where he wore many hats and so he understands the process. He met deadlines when it was possible, but at times they all ran into roadblocks. He could be firm, but he was not a yeller. During stressful situations he worked with his team to resolve the issue.

Some of their work was controversial, the police demerger is one example. They have a volunteer fire department that runs via subscriptions, but no one was paying them. The County is in the process of taking ownership and that has been controversial. Also, Mr. Smith was the final person for the grievance process on employees recommended for dismissal. Lastly, when they had to make a change in the courts, they received push back and he had to stand his ground. He handled these difficult situations well.

Reference Notes William “Lee” Smith

Mr. Smith left the County when a new Chairman came on board and wanted a change. They put Mr. Smith on investigation and promoted the Assistant Manager, who they knew, to the position. He had detractors in the community though this is common for someone in his position.

Ms. Cramer would hire Mr. Smith. He is a good manager though he needs a good admin to help him with scheduling. He is very talented, and he did well in Chatham County, but he may have even more success in a smaller municipality.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Talented,
- Approachable to the staff,
- Decisive,
- Experienced,
- Creative, and
- Networks to resolve issues.

Strengths: Experience, looks to connect and collaborate rather than recreating the wheel, strategic planning.

Weaknesses: A few times he got ahead of the Board, meaning he was going down a path and had not communicated to the Board members. Also, he looked for connections between agencies which was not a weakness, but it could slow progress. Lastly, he and his two assistant managers attended all the same meetings. It may have been more efficient to divide responsibilities between the three.

Will Peebles – Reporter, Savannah Morning News, Savannah, GA 706-699-4681

Mr. Peebles has lived in Chatham County since 2016. In 2022 Mr. Peebles took over the city beat, and his first assignment was to investigate Mr. Smith’s suspension. Mr. Peebles never got an exact answer of what led to the suspension and the off the record comments seemed like it was primarily a disagreement with elected officials who had a different vision for the community. Mr. Smith is not a yes man and he is also realistic. He really liked his job and if he was given a blank slate to work, he would still be the manager in Chatham County. His tenures in Chatham and in his previous positions were far longer than average for the field.

Mr. Smith is not afraid to ask for help or guidance if he does not know an answer. He was very transparent and open with Mr. Peebles.

Mr. Smith ran Commission meetings and answered questions, without running over the elected officials. Nothing ever seemed to be off in Board meetings, he worked with difficult Commissions and was often the voice of reason.

Reference Notes William “Lee” Smith

The most common comment that Mr. Peebles heard after Mr. Smith was suspended was “What did Lee Smith do?” The community seemed very surprised by the suspension. Mr. Peebles personally feels that if Mr. Smith had done something worthy of a suspension that the Commission would have had no qualms in stating these actions publicly. It seemed like Mr. Smith told some Commissioners no a few more times than they would have liked him to. Mr. Smith knows government and he is smart.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Likes his work,
- Realistic,
- Transparent,
- Open, and
- Likeable.

Strengths: Capable of working with elected officials who are more politicians than civil servants, legal minded, very transparent, very open, likeable.

Weaknesses: In Mr. Smith’s personnel file the one negative that Mr. Peebles remembers is communication, but he cannot remember the date and it seems like it was noted towards the beginning of Mr. Smith’s tenure in Chatham County.

Borden Parker – County Attorney, Wayne County, NC 919-735-7275

Mr. Parker is a County employee but also works in a private law firm. He has known Mr. Smith since 2001. Mr. Smith did an extremely good job for Wayne County and was a very competent manager.

Interactions between Mr. Parker and Mr. Smith are exceptionally good. Mr. Parker considers Mr. Smith a friend but acknowledges that they were not close enough to socialize outside of work.

Mr. Smith made good decisions when hiring personnel. His decisions in general were very good. He was an innovative manager who kept the organization running at a high-performance level. He was a leader who rallied the employees around the vision of the elected body.

Mr. Parker is an old country lawyer who prefers not to use email. They met in person three to four times a week. Mr. Smith was very good about keeping others informed. His work was completed on time.

The only complaints Mr. Parker heard about Mr. Smith were from individuals who wanted Mr. Smith to do something that he felt was not in the best interest of the County. He worked tremendously well with the public.

Reference Notes William “Lee” Smith

Mr. Smith managed the budgeting process very differently from the manager he replaced. He streamlined the process, added more accountability, and made it easier to understand. The Board trusted the budget was well done and overall, they did not feel the need to scrutinize it. Mr. Smith has excellent financial skills.

Mr. Smith and the Board decided it was time for Mr. Smith to resign. Some might consider the incident controversial, but Mr. Parker does not. Mr. Parker is not personally aware of anything in Mr. Smith’s background that would embarrass an employer. Though Mr. Parker could not name anyone who would disagree with this reference, some in the community might say Mr. Smith was too controlling and wanted to do things his way rather than how the Commissioners wanted. Mr. Parker does not agree with this assessment.

Mr. Parker was on the hiring panel that selected Mr. Smith and would hire him again. He was a good Manager for Wayne County.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Extremely competent,
- Very energetic,
- Intelligent,
- People person,
- Hard working, and
- Willing to think outside the box.

Strengths: Good with finances, good at managing staff.

Weaknesses: Works too hard.

Rita Hodges – Former Chairman of the School Board, Lenoir County, NC 252-560-9392

Ms. Hodges met Mr. Smith in the early 2000’s. She interacted with him as the Chairman of the school Board in a neighboring County and served on a regional mental health board with him. She has the utmost respect for and highest opinion of Mr. Smith and his abilities.

Mr. Smith was very knowledgeable, always professional, and he managed tasks well. His job performance was excellent, and he earned the highest marks possible on reviews. He interacted very well with others.

As Ms. Hodges does not live in the County, she was not privy to every hiring choice. However, the employees hired by Mr. Smith that she interacted with were top notch. Mr. Smith’s decisions in general were very good.

**Reference Notes
William “Lee” Smith**

Mr. Smith was an innovator who thought outside the box. He assessed current operations before making any changes. He then improved processes until they functioned at the highest possible level. He was very good about keeping others informed, primarily through email but sometimes via the telephone.

The mental health board faced a very sensitive personnel issue where someone accused a provider of improprieties. Mr. Smith resolved the situation. He had good financial skills and was always quick to respond to phone calls and requests for information. Everyone that Ms. Hodges knows and works with would agree with the statements in this reference.

Ms. Hodges is not aware of anything controversial in Mr. Smith’s private or personal background. She has not discussed his departure from the County with Mr. Smith, but her understanding is that the resignation was politically influenced and not due to job performance.

Without a doubt Ms. Hodges would hire Mr. Smith. Any municipality would be fortunate to have Mr. Smith as their manager. He is an asset.

Words or phrases used to describe Lee Smith:

- Professional,
- Knowledgeable,
- Extremely competent
- Top notch individual,
- Good communicator, and
- Innovative.

Strengths: Communication.

Weaknesses: His plate is so full that he is always busy.

Prepared by: Lynelle Klein
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
December 5, 2022

Smith GONE - Long-suspended county manager, Chatham reach severance agreement; commission appoints Michael Kaigler interim

Author/Byline: Will Peebles

The Chatham Commission on Friday approved the resignation of now-former County Manager **Lee Smith**, who has been on administrative leave since July 21, and formally began contract negotiations with Assistant County Manager Michael Kaigler, making him **Smith's** official successor. Kaigler had been serving as interim manager since **Smith's** suspension.

Chatham County Chairman Chester Ellis said after a lot of back and forth with **Smith's** lawyer, Brent Savage of Savannah-based Savage Turner Pinckney Savage & Sprouse, they were finally able to come to an agreement.

Smith, reached by text Friday, said the day was bittersweet. "Today is somewhat bittersweet for me. I tremendously enjoyed my time as part of Team Chatham and will always consider the entire team as family. I am glad the negotiations were finalized today so myself and Chatham County can move forward. I am pursuing opportunities in a number of places but consider Savannah home. I plan to maintain my home here and possibly return when retirement rolls around," a text from **Smith** read.

Ellis did not divulge any details about **Smith's** severance agreement and told reporters he would rather they "get it in writing" to avoid any inaccuracies, though he also said the contract "will be made public." Savannah Morning News acquired the agreement from **Smith's** lawyers Friday afternoon. In **Smith's** severance agreement, most questions surrounding his resignation are answered, but not all.

What we know:

Smith will officially resign as county manager, effective Jan. 2, 2023. **Smith** will remain on county payroll for a full year, receiving bi-weekly installments of \$9,931.20, for a total of \$258,211.20. The agreement outlines this as "nine months' salary in accordance with his employment contract and additional three months' salary as is stated in the Chatham County Enabling Act." Additionally, the county will continue to make employer pension contributions until Jan. 2. The county will stop paying **Smith's** annual car allowance of \$7,200 per year and will make no further contributions to **Smith's** retirement plan after Jan. 2. **Smith** may be eligible to draw benefits as allowed in accordance with the pension and health plan not to exceed 12 months from the agreement.

Still no reason given on why **Smith** dismissed. In a previous interview with SMN, **Smith** said he believed the reasons for his suspension to be "personal and political," but even after the severance agreement was approved Friday, Ellis refused to say why **Smith** was suspended, again deferring to the agreement itself. But the agreement didn't have any information on why Smith

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

was suspended. In the agreement is a stipulation: "**Smith** has not engaged in, nor is **Smith** aware of, any misconduct or wrongdoing on the party of the County of any kind or any regard." Additionally, the agreement stipulated that **Smith** will not sue the county "out of or in connection with the employment relationship, previously existing between them, or the termination of that relationship," unless the county violates the agreement in any way. "Let me just say, I wish **Mr. Smith** well. I guess some might say I might have been his cheerleader," Ellis said.

Smith said in a previous interview that the whole process -- uncertainty about why he was suspended, dealing with severance negotiations, watching his team carry on without him -- has been rough on him both mentally and emotionally. When people ask him why he was suspended, he doesn't have an answer. "I tell them: 'I don't know, I must have been in a coma. Because I don't know what I did,'" **Smith** said. "Nobody's telling me anything. So, all I can say is: it has to be personal and very political."

In the time since his suspension, **Smith** and his lawyer have been negotiating a severance agreement with the county. **Smith** and Savage received an initial severance agreement sent by the county on Aug. 25 and a second proposal on Sept. 6. The later agreement included a smaller payout. **Smith** told the Savannah Morning News last month that he sought three things from the severance agreement: vestment in the county's pension fund; health insurance in retirement; and the equivalent of nine months' pay.

Smith's contract called for the nine months' salary buyout should he be terminated without cause. **Smith's** salary at the time of his suspension was \$235,100, meaning he was contractually due \$176,325. According to Savage, **Smith** was pursuing a higher payout.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
November 6, 2022

Suspended Chatham manager speaks about his ouster

Author/Byline: Will Peebles

In July, Chatham County Manager **Lee Smith** was called into Chatham Commission Chairman Chester Ellis' office. At that meeting, he said Ellis was "very, very nice" and "compassionate," but ultimately handed **Smith** a letter, dated July 19, in which the chairman explained he was suspending **Smith** and placing him under investigation due to an unspecified "recent chain of events."

But even now, more than 100 days later, **Smith** has yet to be told what he did wrong or the findings of any supposed investigation. He still hasn't been removed from his position, not by resignation, termination or otherwise. "I do believe Chairman Ellis was trying to protect me from being fired by the [commission]," **Smith** said. "I believe that wholeheartedly, and others do also. It just was a way to block a [removal] vote, quite honestly." Chatham County code requires a two-thirds vote -- six of the nine members -- to remove a county manager from office, but they must adopt a preliminary resolution stating the reasons for removal. This preliminary resolution must also pass by more than two-thirds vote.

In the time since his suspension, **Smith** and his lawyer, Brent Savage of Savannah-based Savage Turner Pinckney Savage & Sprouse law firm, have been trying to negotiate a severance agreement with the county, thus far unsuccessfully. **Smith** and Savage received the initial severance agreement sent by the county on Thursday, Aug. 25. They received another severance agreement from the county on Sept. 6, this time with a smaller payout, and a request for an answer by Tuesday, Sept. 13, 51 days ago as of Nov. 3. **Smith** said there are three things he's asking for in the severance agreement: He wants to be vested by the county to have a pension in retirement; to get health insurance in retirement; and nine months' salary. All three were in the agreement, **Smith** said. **Smith** found the offer agreeable but county leaders reneged. "I signed it, we sent it back, and they then pulled the offer," **Smith** said. "My attorney and I, we looked at filing suit against the board for not fulfilling their obligations [in the severance agreement] and giving me something which I signed in good faith."

Now, **Smith** is still waiting, and he says the whole process -- uncertainty about why he was suspended, dealing with severance negotiations, watching his team carry on without him -- has been rough on him both mentally and emotionally. When people ask him why he was suspended, he doesn't have an answer. "I tell them: 'I don't know, I must have been in a coma. Because I don't know what I did,'" **Smith** said. "Nobody's telling me anything. So, all I can say is: it has to be personal and very political."

A change in attitude toward Smith

A few years ago, **Smith** came out as gay. "I went through a pretty bad divorce after I came here, and soon after that, I came out as gay. And I don't wear pride flags or anything like that. I'm just

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

who I am," **Smith** said. "And I will say that I felt a difference with board members after that happened. It is what it is. You can like me; you can dislike me. I am who I am."

Smith says after coming out he felt that he was viewed differently by some members of Chatham Commission, though he specifically said Ellis treated him no differently after. "I would say with the chairman. No. But with some of the other board members? Yes. I do," **Smith** said. "I can be criticized for this, whatever happens, happens. But I do believe that just the way I'm treated has changed. I just feel disrespected."

Commission complaints

While he claims to not know the exact reason some commissioners want him removed as manager, he has suspicions. **Smith** says through conversations with commission members he deduced that their complaints stemmed from two things: Their inability to review **Smith's** performance formally, and that he was not communicating "the way they thought I should communicate." But since the county has yet to provide him with reasoning for his suspension, he's not sure. All he knows is that someone -- or more -- wants him gone.

In the time since he was put on leave he's been applying for jobs elsewhere. But due to media coverage of his suspension and supposed investigation, he says employers are hesitant to give him a callback. "I've been applying for jobs. I can't even get a return call on jobs because this is still outstanding," **Smith** said. "You look on Google, and you're gonna see this first: That I've been suspended and under investigation." "This literally has hurt me so badly. You can't imagine. And I'm going to use the words 'absolutely terrified' about my future. I'm 58 years old," **Smith** said. "Maybe some decade I can retire, we'll see. But right now, I plan to work until I'm way, way gray."

Despite missing his friends and coworkers in "Team Chatham," **Smith** is fine with leaving, he said, provided the county meets his requests in the severance agreement. "I'm just looking at what I'm owed. What I deserve for the job I've done in eight and a half years," **Smith** said. "I don't have a single thing in my file. I've never been reprimanded, in writing, or in public, or I mean, nothing."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
June 24, 2022

Chatham wants millage rate increase

Author/Byline: Katie Nussbaum

The Chatham Commission is scheduled to adopt a new budget -- and the property tax millage rate that goes with it -- at this Friday's meeting, the final regularly scheduled session this fiscal year. Yet, there remains unresolved details.

County Manager **Lee Smith** has called for a fiscal year 2023 budget of \$859 million that would require the commission maintain the 2022 millage rate, which is considered a tax increase as the county's tax digest has increased over the last year.

Commission Chairman Chester Ellis, meanwhile, is lobbying for adoption of the rollback rate, which is the millage that will generate the same amount of revenue in 2023 as was produced in 2022. Doing so would lower the general fund millage by approximately 1 mill or \$1 for every \$1,000 of a property's assessed value and would also lower taxes specific to unincorporated Chatham residents and those who pay for the Chatham Area Transit Authority.

Smith and the county staff declined to submit a budget proposal that adjusts to the rollback rate. The difference in general fund revenue between the existing and rollbacked millage rate is approximately \$22 million. Here are several areas where those extra dollars would go. All percentages are based on the difference between the FY22 adopted amount and the FY23 proposed amount.

District Attorney and Public Defender offices

These two pillars of Chatham's criminal justice system will see increased budget dollars. The District Attorney's office is set to receive an additional \$330,000 in funds, although that amount is nearly \$500,000 below what was requested by District Attorney Shalena Cook-Jones. The Public Defender's office will see a bigger bump: more than \$500,000, or a 15% increase.

Museums and community centers

Chatham County will make significant increased investments in county-operated museums, such as the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum and the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force, and in its four community centers at Lake Mayer, Frank Murray, Tom Triplett, and the Chatham Co. Aquatic Center. The museums will get an increase of 88.9% to \$224,720 and the community center budget will increase 42.9% to \$227,131. These facilities have seen decreased use - and lower budget allowances - in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Risk reduction and intervention programs

The Front Porch, a community-based juvenile crime risk reduction program, will get a 16.9% increase to \$268,039. Similarly, Youth Intercept, another intervention program, will get a 16.8% increase to \$324,206.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Emergency management agency

The county's emergency management budget will increase by 13.5% to \$1,742,952. Much of those dollars are earmarked for increased employee compensation. The budgets for printing and binding, travel, and vehicles also were expanded.

Public information office

The public information budget will increase 52% to \$841,352, with much of that dedicated to employee compensation and related benefits.

County manager's office

The county manager's budget will increase slightly by 3.7% to \$1,311,999.

Solid waste fee hike coming

According to the budget, a recent financial analysis of the dry trash fee turned up a deficit of more than \$640,000 in FY23. The recent audit of the solid waste users determined that approximately 3,300 residences were not paying the current \$85 fee. County Manager **Lee Smith** is recommending the fee increase to \$96 annually. Additionally, Smith recommends that the county utilize a consultant to review the solid waste program for efficiencies and processes later in the year. Unincorporated residents will also pay a fee for fire service this year for the first time.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
September 1, 2021

County manager: Beleaguered 911 center for you in an emergency

This is an op-ed by Chatham County Manager **Lee Smith**.

Chatham County Communications, better known as 911, is a major service provided to our community. The department is responsible for routing emergency calls from citizens, visitors and motorists in an urgent situation or reporting an event witnessed. These calls consist of medical assistance needed, vehicular incidents, dangerous situations and the list goes on.

These calls require expeditious but concise data entry such as name, location, nature of the call, assessment of the situation and what emergency response services may be needed as directed by professional and dedicated 911 telecommunicators.

As noted in a news story published in this newspaper in early August, the 911 center has several vacant positions. However, the center consoles are always fully staffed, as 911 management has rearranged shifts to ensure full coverage as has been done for more than two years.

The county is recommending increasing salaries for telecommunicators in an attempt to better retain and attract qualified candidates. As additional positions are filled, 911 management is working to reduce 12 hour work shifts to reduce personnel fatigue.

The communication's center answers calls as quickly as possible; however, please keep in mind there are times the 911 center experiences a higher than normal level of calls due to multiple emergency events. These peak times will cause delays in answering calls and in some cases the incoming call will "roll" to an answering system. Your call has not been lost. The 911 system will automatically call the incoming number back with a telecommunicator prepared to take your information.

The 911 center receives over 10,500 calls per week with approximately 40% of those calls being administrative non-emergency calls. Citizens can help themselves and all other citizens by not calling 911 for non-emergency calls. These calls are holding telecommunicators for long periods of time creating long wait times for real emergencies.

Citizens can help to reduce the center's call volume by not calling 911 with non-emergency calls. Problems such as water meters, potholes, etc. are not emergencies. If you want to contact Chatham County with non-emergent items, please go to MyChatham.org on your mobile device's app or play store, download the app and register to report these types of incidents.

If you need information regarding a city or town service please contact them directly. We will begin a campaign to advertise these numbers in the next 30 days. The county will be working with all municipalities to begin a new process of non-emergent service calls within the next few months to direct you to the appropriate entity.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

COVID-19 has produced a myriad of problems affecting 911. Hospitals are experiencing a heavier than normal patient load in emergency rooms. This in turn is increasing the wait time of ambulances waiting to admit patients which in turn affects 911. Additionally, people experiencing mild symptoms or possible contact with COVID-19 should contact a medical provider, not 911.

The 911 service is a crucial part of emergency response for over 350,000 people every day, including regular citizens, visitors and commuting workers coming from other areas. The County estimates receiving over 600,000 calls in 2021.

We need your help to keep Chatham County safe and allow 911 to do its job to dispatch emergency services such as fire, rescue and law enforcement to save lives.

Your Turn

Lee Smith

Guest columnist

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Atlanta Journal-Constitution
August 6, 2021

You might experience delays when calling the Chatham County 911 call center. Here's why
Author/Byline: Katie Nussbaum

Savannah and Chatham County residents dialing 911 to report an emergency are experiencing delays in the calls being answered as the center faces a shortage of operators. The lags are marked by repeated rings. For those who abandon the calls, the system has a mechanism to seize those calls and give a return call with automated prompts, which will place the caller back in the queue for an operator. The 911 call center currently has about 20 vacancies, according to Chatham County Manager **Lee Smith**. "It's a major problem, but we're not at a crisis yet," **Smith** said.

The shortage creates a domino-like effect. When an emergency call comes in, operators stay on the line until first responders are on site. They cannot work other calls in the meantime. "So that means if you've got 12 or 15 people on shift that takes a person totally out of the loop. So quite frankly, when we peak out like that, there's not a lot you can do. You try to expedite calls, but expediting calls can be dangerous," he said. Several calls made to 911 recently by former Savannah City Council member Julian Miller went unanswered. Miller was calling to report a person who appeared to be having a medical episode along Abercorn Street. "He was leaning over like he was going to fall into traffic and cars were actually changing lanes to get around him. It was a dangerous situation," he said. The first two calls Miller made went unanswered for a combined 28 rings. Prior to getting elected to city council Miller served as the spokesperson for the Savannah Police Department, so he called an officer he knew to report the situation. In the meantime he received a callback from the automated system and after dialing one for an emergency, the phone rang another 12 times. Miller said the situation was frustrating. "It's kind of a hopeless feeling when you're waiting on an ambulance," Miller said.

Chatham County took over the 911 center in 2018. The operation serves Savannah and all Chatham County municipalities except for Tybee Island, which has its own 911 system. Fully staffed, the county's call center has about 100 operators and often competes with private industries and other employers like the Georgia Ports Authority for employees. "Sometimes with private industry, we're not able to compete at the same level. So it is very tough for local governments," **Smith** said.

To offset the shortage, operators are working longer shifts, but **Smith** said overtime can be dangerous for a stressful job. His office along with the 911 team and human resources are currently looking at ways to scale back the current 12-hour shifts by anywhere from two to four hours. "Twelve hours is too stressful and I think that is part of the issue; they're very stressed, that is a, a very difficult job. It's a thankless job," he said. "Those folks take a beating with folks not just trying to hear a call, but they're trying to de-escalate situations. So it's not just with medical protocols, they become mental health counselors. We deal with a couple thousand suicide attempts a year, which they de-escalate many times. That is very stressful." Non-emergency calls. Many local residents view 911 as the main contact number for local

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

government. Non-emergency calls accounted for 90,048 911 calls between Jan. 1 and Aug. 3, or about 40% of the 310,348 calls. Many of those calls are in regards to water, sewer or other municipal services, **Smith** said. "I know those calls may be important to you, and that you've got a concern about your water, or about a cat running through the yard. Not that that's not important, but to 911 it is not. 911 is for the safety of individuals and property, period," **Smith** said. The county is working to partner more with neighboring municipalities to put together protocols so that the call center will no longer be responsible for those non-emergency calls. If callers make their way through the automated prompts, it reverts the call back to 911. "I have made a commitment that that loop will close; it has to close. It's about lives, it's about property, a fire or it could be a wreck, those are more important," **Smith** said. "Eventually we're going to deny those kinds of calls with call takers and not take information." **Smith** said the change will happen by the end of this year.

The City of Savannah currently operates Savannah 311 for non-emergency calls related to property or city services and other municipalities might have to look at doing something similar. The county has also explored the possibility of a 24-hour call service where operators would take notes and information and forward it to the correct government entity or organization. "So we're trying to find a better effective way. It's going to cost, but when I look at putting people's lives in jeopardy, that cost is worth the investment," **Smith** said.

Recruitment. In an effort to fill the operator vacancies, the county has stepped up it's recruitment through recruitment videos and a larger social media presence. Applicants remain few in number but the county has seen an uptick in qualified candidates. New hires undergo a minimum nine-month training program, which also includes on-the-job instruction.

Smith said he considers the operators the first line of defense. "I'm not saying that anyone else is not as important, but if that first portal is not as effective and efficient as it should be, everything else fails," he said. "And that would be EMS, fire, law enforcement, marine patrol, because they have to have good data when they walk in to be able to service their calls." A communications officer trainee's pay starts at \$13.52 per hour and at a minimum applicants must have a high school diploma or GED and at least three months of work experience involving customer service, to include some experience dispatching or using a multi-line phone system. Applicants must also pass CritiCall testing, which assesses the skills and aptitudes needed to be a 911 call handler and dispatcher. Completion of various training also comes with pay increases.

Both full-time and part-time positions are available, **Smith** said. Interested applicants can apply online through Chathamcounty.org or even call the county manager's office at 912-652-7869. "I will make sure they get to talk to someone who can talk about the job, what it entails, about county benefits, about salaries. We're trying to take a proactive stance to get people to apply and to come in because they're also good jobs," **Smith** said. "I know they're challenging, but it's not all bad. They've got a great family out there. They're very close, they're very supportive of each other. You have to be in those stressful times. You know, sometimes somebody needs a hug."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
June 29, 2020

'Cautious' Chatham budget approved \ - Rate rollback for unincorporated areas adopted
Author/Byline: Nick Robertson

Amid an uncertain economic forecast, Chatham commissioners unanimously approved an austere crafted county budget for fiscal year 2021 at their regular biweekly meeting Friday. Because of the ongoing economic turbulence caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Chatham's new budget calls for cost-cutting measures - including a hiring freeze and a pause in most new capital-improvement expenditures - in what County Manager **Lee Smith** characterized as a "cautious approach for the next fiscal year." The county's FY 2021 spans from July 1, 2020, to June 30.

Totaling just over \$205 million, Chatham's FY 2021 General Fund Management and Operations budget was passed without increasing the previous year's millage rate of 11.543, although for this budget item county officials declined to apply the rollback rate applicable under Georgia state law as an option for local governments to adjust property taxes to account for inflation. Following requests from several commissioners, the county's \$40.5 million FY 2021 Special Service District (SSD) budget - applicable only to residents of the county's unincorporated areas to fund the Chatham County Police Department, public works and other services typically provided by municipalities - did include a millage-rate rollback from 4.911 to 4.801.

"Ideally, I would love to have been here representing and adopting the rollback rate for [the General Fund Management and Operations budget], and a further reduction in the Special Service District," said Commission Chairman Al Scott, citing projected sales-tax losses as one of several economic plights likely facing Chatham County in the upcoming months. "Given the situation, I was very concerned that if we went down that road, we would jeopardize violating our own policy that we adopted on maintaining a 30% reserve," Scott said, adding that this reserve is intended to avoid entering "a deficit-spending mode that we cannot afford to be in as a county government" if Chatham were to be struck by another economically devastating disaster, such as a hurricane.

While lauding the rollback-rate adoption in the SSD budget, Commissioner Pat Farrell questioned if the county's current taxation structure is fair in regard to the amount of SSD revenue being transferred to the General Fund, an amount he pegged at "roughly \$3.2 million." Farrell said that this arrangement was established decades ago, before the county's unincorporated areas experienced considerable urbanization, and that Chatham is one of only six counties in Georgia that has a separate SSD budget. "I have some qualms about using indirect costs under this scenario," Farrell said, urging the commissioners to reexamine the county's budget structuring during the months ahead. "We may need to ask ourselves if this is indeed a proper way to tax and provide services."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Commissioner Dean Kicklighter agreed with Farrell while voicing opposition to "double-taxing the residents in the unincorporated area" with the SSD budget. "This is three million paid by the unincorporated area residents, and it would be no different than asking the city of Savannah to contribute \$5 or \$6 million towards the overall budget for the entire county," Kicklighter said.

In response to these concerns, Assistant County Manager Linda Kramer said that staff would be open to reevaluating Chatham's taxation structure in the future with direction from the commissioners. "As we roll into our mid-year budget review, this would be a good time to look at the policy itself and just get more feedback from you all," Kramer said.

Chatham's FY 2021 budget was passed with a stipulation that it be reviewed later this year to possibly amend spending plans depending on economic developments of the upcoming months. "We'll revisit the budget sometime in November or December, when we have a better and fuller understanding and can do some projection on where we think sales tax will land in these, what I call, abnormal conditions," Scott said. "Hopefully we'll be, at that time, within six months of some sort of vaccine and really getting back to the new normal."

Friday's Chatham County Commission meeting was the first held since its chambers within downtown Savannah's Old Courthouse had been refurbished to comply with COVID-19 guidelines, with the dais expanded for increased physical distancing and plexiglass dividers installed between each commissioner's desk. Scott said he expects this coronavirus-prevention arrangement to be maintained into 2021.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
June 24, 2019

Stranded veteran prompts new 911 protocols for Chatham County

Author/Byline: Tandra Smith

The Chatham County Police and Sheriff's Department now has new protocols put into place regarding 911 calls after a man was stranded for hours on Interstate 95. As of noon Monday, all calls made to the Chatham County 911 Communications Center where an incident involving a locked car poses a major safety concern will have an officer dispatched to them. This includes, but is not limited to, being stranded on a major thoroughfare or having a child or animal locked in the car.

The changes come after a woman called the center Saturday about a man being stranded on the interstate. The Navy veteran, only identified by the name of Paul on a Facebook post by Lisa Quanstrum, was sitting on the side of the road after locking his cell phone, contacts and other personal items in his car.

According to Quanstrum's post, Paul had been on the side of the road for close to two hours before she stopped to help him. Quanstrum called 911 and was informed that nobody would be able to come out and help the stranded man because it would be a liability to unlock car doors for individuals, according to her Facebook post.

Lee Smith, county manager, confirmed that they did receive calls about the stranded man in a press conference Monday. **Smith** said that an agency was not dispatched because the man was located outside of their jurisdiction, Port Wentworth's, to be exact.

Though **Smith** wishes that more information, particularly medical, was communicated more clearly, he said that he really faults no one in this situation. **Smith** said the lack of a response was a combination of where they were and the protocols not being what they should have been.

Smith also said that the changing of the protocols would have occurred whether or not the Quanstrum's Facebook post had gone viral or not. "If we get one call on something, we have it investigated," **Smith** said. "We don't work for ourselves here; we work for our citizens and for 15 million visitors and people that pass through."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
May 25, 2019

No tax hike in county draft budget
Author/Byline: DeAnn Komaneky

No tax rate increases are recommended in the fiscal year 2019-2020 Chatham County budget presented to commissioners for a first look at their regular meeting on Friday.

County Manager **Lee Smith** said the budget was planned using the current millage rate of 11.543 mills in the general fund and 4.99 mills in the special service district, which covers services the county provides in the unincorporated areas including police, public works, engineering, and building safety. The budget for the general fund is listed at \$203 million and \$36 million for the SSD. Commissioners will be meeting one on one with **Smith** and county staff to review the budget before a public hearing is held on June 14. The budget will be adopted on June 28.

The general fund budget proposal includes an almost 7 percent increase. The SSD budget would increase by almost 5 percent. Some highlights in the recommended budget include 21 new full-time and two new part-time positions along with 20 reclassifications and four salary adjustments.

Smith said five of the positions are to create a new department, juvenile indigent defense. The new department will be supervised by the county's indigent defense department head and will use county staff and contract attorneys.

The change is being made due to the high costs associated with indigent defense in Juvenile Court, **Smith** said. Probate Court will have two part-time positions changed to full-time, if the budget as written is approved. The county also plans to set aside \$1 million to use for debt service on the new Trial Court facility.

The new courthouse is estimated to cost \$80 million. The court is in the design phase which should be complete in early 2020. Phase 1, to demolish the old county jail to make way for the building is complete. The site is located at Montgomery Street next to the existing courthouse. The building will provide eight courtrooms for the Superior Court, four for the State Court, a jury selection room and administrative space for judges and staff.

Special Local Option Sales Tax funds from the upcoming SPLOST VII include \$50 million for the new courthouse. Voters will decide whether to approve the one cent sales tax in November. During the upcoming year, county staff will work on developing requests for proposals for the project and finance options. The county also plans on securing a canal clearing contract, estimated at \$250,000 to help Public Works in maintaining the drainage system. A \$250,000 mowing contract for roadways is also planned.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
January 30, 2019

Freight depot demolition OK'd

Author/Byline: Eric Curl

Despite pleas from about a dozen opponents, the Metropolitan Planning Commission recommended approval of a plan to demolish a 90-year-old freight terminal and construct a seven-story apartment complex on the site just outside of downtown Savannah's protected Historic District. Tuesday's vote, which was recommended by MPC staff, came after County Manager **Lee Smith**, speaking as a commissioner, threatened to contact the county attorney in response to some commissioners questioning aspects of the plan he said were outside their authority, including the planned demolition itself and whether potential improvements to the adjacent Savannah-Ogeechee canal were approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "We have to stick to the purview of this board," **Smith** said.

The property owner, WEDP, will next have to present the general development plan to develop 255 market-rate apartments at the site at 703 Louisville Road, along with an accompanying rezoning, to the Savannah City Council for consideration.

The vote on Tuesday came after a consultant's report commissioned by WEDP found that the terminal was not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places due to significant architectural alterations during the past 50 years. The owner's representatives also said that - regardless of whether tax credits would be available - preserving the structure would not be economically feasible due to the building's dilapidated condition and significant design and engineering challenges that would be associated with erecting the project around the depot building located on a brownfield site. "It would cost a lot of money, and it would be a really tall order to get this building back to where it is completely preserved," said WEDP Attorney John Northup III. But local architect Kevin Rose said the building could be saved using a little imagination and vigor, and he questioned the study's findings. "This goes back to a report by a developer that is suiting the developer to reach their own goals," Rose said.

Historic Savannah Foundation President and CEO Daniel Carey noted that MPC staff's recommendation for approval also included six conditions, including the incorporation of some aspects of the building into the project, confirmation on how a 20-percent green-space requirement would be met, and clarification on the type of green infrastructure, low-impact stormwater management techniques that would be used. "There are so many reservations and concerns, it was curious how we ended up with a recommendation for this," Carey said.

Northup said the owners could demolish the building even if it was eligible for the national designation, and they agreed to meet federal preservation standards to mitigate the loss by compiling a photographic archive of the structure. The MPC's vote comes after the Savannah City Council's vote on Nov. 20 to approve WEDP's petition to acquire a 1-acre narrow strip of city-owned land along the Savannah-Ogeechee Canal, which feeds into the Springfield, to

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

support the project. In addition to paying the city \$120,000 for the property, WEDP is to invest a minimum of \$1.5 million to build a retaining wall along the canal, according to the agreement.

City officials said the canal and Canal District will benefit from construction of the new retaining wall, which would be dedicated back to the city upon completion. City Manager Rob Hernandez, a member of the commission, was not present at Tuesday's meeting.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
September 21, 2018

Chatham County receives national award for branding of Chatham County Police Department

Author/Byline: Staff Member

On Sept. 6, the Chatham County Public Information Office accepted the City, County, Communications and Marketing Association Silver Circle award at the Savvy Awards in Milwaukee, WI. Chatham County was a finalist in the new logo, artwork and branding campaign category for the branding of the Chatham County Police Department, said spokeswoman Catherine Glasby. "I am so proud of my Public Information Team, especially Abby Murphy who created all the logos and artwork," she said. "While the Silver Circle award is a 2nd place award, it shows the depth of talent that we have on this team. The winner of the Savvy Award was Clark County Water Reclamation, NV (Las Vegas). Clark County worked with a marketing company and we did everything in house."

Chatham County competed against a number of communities in this category, according to Glasby.

At Friday's county commission meeting, County Manager **Lee Smith** commended team members for their hard work. "In 2018, the County has received national awards from organizations like the Association County Commissioners of Georgia , National Association of Counties , Government Social Media Organization, Facebook and now 3CMA," he said. "It shows the dedication of Team Chatham to deliver high quality services to our citizens. I am very proud of all the members of Team Chatham for their accomplishments."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
June 8, 2018

Chatham doubles dry trash fee
Author/Byline: Eric Curl

Chatham County is planning on maintaining the existing property tax rate, but residents of the unincorporated county will have to pay double to have their yard waste and bulk items picked up. After his predecessor, Russ Abolt, made failed attempts to implement a similar increase for years, County Manager **Lee Smith**, who took the job in 2014, managed to convince the majority of the Chatham County Commission to raise the annual fee charged for dry-trash collection from \$43 to \$85. On Friday, County Chairman Al Scott joined commissioners James Holmes, Tabitha Odell, Jay Jones and Chester Ellis in approving the increase that **Smith** and Finance Director Amy Davis said was needed to cover most of the costs of the \$2.4 million operation, which includes weekly curbside yard waste collection and monthly bulk item pickup.

A solid waste management fee to use the landfill was also increased by state legislators from \$1 to \$2.50 per ton. Some of the \$1.6 million in additional revenue generated by the landfill fee will be used to cover annual depreciation costs of about \$255,983 needed to replace about \$4 million worth of aging equipment and vehicles, under the approved plan. "Public works was cut so deeply back in 2007 and 2008 that they never caught up," **Smith** said.

Commissioners Patrick Farrell, Dean Kicklighter and Helen Stone voted against the changes after raising concerns about the need for the increase and the impact on residents. Farrell said the county had increased property taxes in previous years and police costs are down after Chatham split from the city in February to form a stand alone department. "I don't see the case for raising it," he said. "I see the case that we reduce it from \$43 to zero personally." The dry trash fee had been increased to \$173 last year to recover the costs of removing debris from Tropical Storm Hermine and Hurricane Matthew the previous fall, but the \$130 increase was to be a temporary measure to restore the reserve funds used for the cleanup.

Kicklighter had suggested using reserve funds to cover the costs of the dry-trash service and equipment since the county now had enough to cover more than three-months of operations, while two months is what is generally recommended. "I think we need to try not putting the fee on the citizens," he said. "Use some of the reserves, buy the capital improvements and see how it shakes out next year." But Ellis and Holmes both said that the three-month reserve amount, which was agreed to as a goal of the commission's, was needed to prepare for more storms. "We need to look at our immediate past," Ellis said. "If we have one, two or more hurricanes like we had with Matthew and Irma, we are going to wind up spending \$30 million up front." The fee increase was approved as part of a revised revenue ordinance for the 2018-2019 fiscal year, which begins in July. The proposed budget maintains the existing property tax rate for the county and Special Service District, which pays for services provided outside Chatham's municipalities. The commission is expected to adopt the budget on June 22.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
February 10, 2018

**CHATHAM TO REPAY CITY FOR PAST POLICE WORK\ - \$2.1M TRANSFER
MARKS LATEST STEP AWAY FROM JOINT DEPARTMENT**

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

The Chatham County Commission on Friday authorized staff to cut a \$2.1 million check to the city of Savannah for police services provided in the past.

The back payment, which was approved by both entities in advance of the Feb. 1 split of the Savannah-Chatham police department, is part of an ongoing reconciliation effort between the two governments, County Manager **Lee Smith** said. Briefly addressing the payment after the commission's meeting Friday, Smith said he expects any remaining vehicles and equipment from the joint department to be returned to their respective owners in the next couple of weeks. In addition, he said, county staff have nearly finished installing the necessary infrastructure at the county-owned precinct on Whitmarsh Island and he reported that Chatham officers will begin occupying the Islands Precinct in the next week or two.

It's now been a little more than a week since the two governments resumed sole responsibility for policing their own jurisdictions, and the county manager said things are picking up in unincorporated Chatham's reformed police department. The county manager told the commission that 15 sworn officers are preparing to join the Chatham County Police Department's ranks, with an additional 70 or 80 recruits waiting in the queue. "It's moving," he said Friday.

Meanwhile, as the county works to put the people and equipment in place to run the standalone department, other adjustments are being made to the county's code of ordinances to reflect the Chatham County Police Department's return. The commission held a second and final reading Friday of two ordinance amendments that replace references to the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department in the revenue ordinance and other code sections with "Chatham County Police Department." A similar revision to the Chatham County Speed Zone ordinance will be up for second reading at the commission's next meeting.

In other business Friday:

- **Smith** reported that the county is hoping to raise funds from the private sector to purchase a \$250,000 digital scoreboard for Memorial Stadium. Smith added that the county is continuing its master plan for recreation in the community, an effort that is expected to include cooperation from local municipalities and the Savannah-Chatham school board. Commission Chairman Al Scott said the findings in the recreation master plan will be a driver in sales tax spending moving forward.

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William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
December 30, 2017

**CHATHAM DOWNPLAYS POTENTIAL LANDFILL RELEASES - ARSENIC,
COBALT FOUND AT CHEVIS ROAD, SHARON PARK**

Author/Byline: Mary Landers

Routine monitoring of two Chatham County landfills has raised a concern about heavy metals leaking into groundwater at Chevis Road and Sharon Park. Chatham County advertised its findings as public notices in the Savannah Morning News in early November. "Arsenic has been detected in groundwater at levels significantly above background concentrations and above Georgia EPD-approved groundwater protection standards," the notice for Chevis Road Landfill reads. "Metals have been detected in groundwater at levels statistically significant above background concentrations and above Georgia EPD-approved groundwater protection standards," the notice for Sharon Park Road Landfill reads. The metals detected at Sharon Park were arsenic and cobalt, with readings of up to five times the limit for arsenic there.

Chatham County Manager **Lee Smith** said the county doesn't see a public health concern because elevated levels of either metals were detected in only two of a dozen monitoring wells at Chevis and two of 14 such wells at Sharon Park. The county's environmental consultant at both sites since 2008, Advanced Environmental Management, wrote in its report for Chevis Road Landfill that "Arsenic appears to be naturally occurring in the soils at this facility" and that "turbidity is at least partially influencing arsenic detections." AEM is "ascertaining where to put additional wells" to determine where the contamination is coming from at both sites. "If it is the landfill then mitigation will be required," **Smith** said.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division's Jeff Cown said last month his agency had not yet confirmed the release, despite the fact that the sampling occurred in March. EPD confirmation is what triggers the requirement for the public notice. Like **Smith** and AEM, he noted there are high levels of naturally occurring arsenic in Chatham County. "We want to inform the public. We don't want to scare the public," said Cown, chief of the land protection branch for the Georgia EPD.

The public notification requirement came about with a 2016 law requiring landfills to notify local authorities of the release of contaminants "dangerous to human health." The legislation was prompted by the releases at Broadhurst Landfill in Jesup where large quantities of coal ash were shipped in and local residents didn't know about the releases from the landfill until well after the fact. The law requires municipal solid waste landfills to notify local governing authorities of the city and county where the landfill is located if there is a release of a contaminant that is likely to pose a danger to human health. It doesn't specify which contaminants fall into that category. The law also requires notice in a local newspaper within 14 days of "confirmation of the release by EPD."

Smith said that while the lack of that EPD confirmation meant the county was not obligated to

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publish the notice he wanted to do so to be proactive. "We are getting ahead of the curve so we don't wait six to nine months for this to be exacerbated," he said. **Smith** said the new law was meant to target coal ash but has unintended consequences for other landfills. He expects to see changes to the law in the upcoming legislative session.

But Altamaha Riverkeeper Jen Hilburn called for continued notification. "This is another of many examples of leaks of toxic heavy metals from improperly stored contaminants. With coal ash being moved around for proper storage we must move towards placing all contaminants, coal ash and more, in lined and capped facilities away from our waterways," said Altamaha Riverkeeper Jen Hilburn. "A little arsenic here, a little thallium there, a little toxaphene here a little benzene there....when contaminants are regularly leaking at statistically significant levels, we all suffer as these pile up in our rivers, in our drinking water supply. Death by a thousand cuts is still death."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
November 29, 2017

**CITY SEEKING \$6 MILLION POLICE REIMBURSEMENT FROM COUNTY\ -
ALDERMAN ANTICIPATES MATTER WILL END UP IN COURT**

Author/Byline: Eric Curl

The city of Savannah is still attempting to recover more than \$6 million from Chatham County for Savannah-Chatham police costs, as the two governments prepare to end the merger and create their own police departments, according to officials. But the matter will not likely be resolved before the city adopts its 2018 budget, said Savannah Alderman Julian Miller. "That will probably drag on for a couple years," Miller said. "I anticipate it will end up in court."

However, County Commission Chairman Al Scott said he is not sure there is a dispute in a texted response to an interview request Tuesday and he suggested the reporter talk to County Manager **Lee Smith** about the issue. An attempt to arrange an interview with **Smith** on Tuesday through a county spokesperson was unsuccessful.

The city expects to be reimbursed \$3.6 million by Chatham County for police costs next year, according to the preliminary 2018 budget released last week. But that amount is to fund a Counter Narcotics Team position and for merged police services to continue through January, according to city spokesperson Michelle Gavin. The city is still owed about \$2.3 million for 2016 police costs and an additional \$4 million above the 2017 budgeted amount, Gavin said. The reimbursement amounts are based on the findings of an operations study by Berkshire Advisors that was funded by both governments to provide a fair funding formula. But Chatham officials rejected the consultant's findings, which they said were flawed, and refused to adopt the study's recommendations. In response, the City Council voted in July to end the police merger on Feb. 1.

Meanwhile, City Manager Rob Hernandez is proposing more than \$12.7 million in spending reductions in the city's 2018 budget, unless alternative revenue sources such as a proposed fire fee or tax rate increase are adopted to cover projected shortfalls. But the disputed police reimbursements would not fix the revenue deficits city staffers are projecting for 2018 and beyond, even if the city were able to reach an agreement before the end of the year, Miller said. "You have to be careful of taking a one-time revenue and putting it in a budget," he said. "A budget revenue needs to be recurring." Police-related expenses in the proposed 2018 budget drop by about \$9.2 million to about \$56.8 million next year as a result of the department split, but that cost does not include the consultant's recommendations that the City Council has said it wants to implement in order to improve emergency response times. Those recommendations include 12 more positions for a total of 620 police employees, in addition to more vehicles, at an additional cost of almost \$1.4 million, according to an October staff report. Police Chief Joseph Lumpkin has requested an even larger department comprised of 650 employees, with 555 sworn officers, which the city estimated would increase costs by about \$3.8 million.

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William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

The city's preliminary budget assumes Savannah will continue to operate the regional 911 center at a deficit with no additional funding support from either Chatham or participating municipalities, requiring an almost \$2.3 million subsidy from the general fund - an increase of \$657,946 over 2017, according to Hernandez's budget report. The county has expressed its intent to assume operations in July next year and to cover any funding deficits retroactive to Jan. 1, 2018, but the arrangement is tied to the settlement of the disputed issues regarding unincorporated area law enforcement services, Hernandez said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
October 28, 2017

JAIL GETS LAST-MINUTE HEALTH CONTRACT \ SHERIFF, COMMISSION CHAIRMAN HAMMER OUT DEAL FEW HOURS BEFORE ITS EXPIRATION

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

With just hours left to go before it was set to vacate the facility, Atlanta-based inmate health services provider CorrectHealth was awarded a contract Friday to continue providing health care at the Chatham County jail. On Friday afternoon, Sheriff John Wilcher reported that he was able to work with Chatham County Commission Chairman Al Scott to draw up the extended contract with the company, which will continue through the June 30, 2018, end of the current fiscal year. Wilcher said he hand delivered the document to the chairman just before 4 p.m.

The sheriff said now that the contract is in place, county staff will be posting a request for proposals for inmate health services and take bids for Fiscal Year 2019, which starts July 1, 2018. "It's just a continuation of the contract, it's the same rate as the old contract," the chairman confirmed Friday. He added the document will also have to be approved by the rest of the commission. Assuming the contract is confirmed by the other commissioners, Friday's agreement with CorrectHealth brings to an end a dramatic series of negotiations over inmate health care at the Chatham County jail.

In a summary of the talks provided to the commission last week, County Manager **Lee Smith** said Chatham staffers kicked off the renegotiation efforts with CorrectHealth early this year, and that they continued even after the county commission voted to enter into a new contract with the company on Oct. 6. But by the following week, **Smith** said, he made an executive decision not to renew the company's contract based on a "lack of response, budget and impending deadlines, but more importantly the legal requirements to ensure health care at the detention center."

Smith wrote that he immediately contacted representatives of Vienna, Va.-based Centurion Inc., to see if they could take up the contract on an emergency basis until the county could re-advertise the service and select a new inmate health services provider. The company indicated that it could, and the county commission narrowly approved the emergency contract at its meeting Oct. 20. Even with that approval, however, it was unclear in the days leading up to Friday's down-to-the-wire contract whether Chatham County officials would have a company in place to provide health care to inmates at week's end.

Although the Chatham County Commission vote was for Centurion to take up health care services beginning today, a series of letters sent back and forth in the days after that vote indicated that, despite its best efforts, the new company would not be in place by the time CorrectHealth had vacated. In a Tuesday letter to the commission and the sheriff, **Smith** wrote that he had requested that CorrectHealth remain in place through mid-November to assist in the transition, but CorrectHealth President Dr. Carlo Musso firmly declined. Musso wrote, in a letter

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William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

sent in response to **Smith's** request, that the county manager had misrepresented to the county commission the facts about previous efforts to come to new terms over his contract with the county, and he was unwilling to continue his contract past Oct. 27. "When I initially read your request to extend our contract, I was inclined to agree to continue to provide services, as long as necessary, given the prevailing interests of the health care needs of the inmates at the CCDC and the needs of the Sheriff's Office," Musso wrote. "We are simply unable and unwilling to extend our relationship with Chatham County, as you have repeatedly and unnecessarily disparaged our reputation and the quality health care services we provide. We simply have no trust in the honesty or integrity of your office. Our last day will remain Oct. 27, 2017 for which full payment will be demanded."

County spokeswoman Catherine Glasby did not respond to repeated requests for comment on the charges levied by agents of CorrectHealth or on the status of the inmate health care contract this week. The sheriff, however, said the new contract with CorrectHealth is basically an extension of the company's previous contract at a monthly cost of just less than \$600,000. And unlike the previous contract, which was between the Chatham County Commission and CorrectHealth, Wilcher said the new version also includes him. "The chairman and I ... sat down and came to an agreement," Wilcher said. "It's the same contract from last year. Everything should go status quo. I'm happy with it."

Moving forward, the sheriff said CorrectHealth has agreed to pursue accreditation under the National Commission on Correctional Health Care, a designation he expects they'll receive by April.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
October 19, 2017

SHERIFF CRITICIZES EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE CONTRACT FOR HEALTH CARE AT JAIL

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

Although he said he's made a point of not involving himself in ongoing negotiations, Chatham County Sheriff John Wilcher also made it known this week he isn't pleased with the process other county officials are using to contract for inmate health services at the county jail.

On Tuesday, the sheriff fired off a pair of letters to inform Chatham County Manager **Lee Smith** and Commission Chairman Al Scott that he disagrees with the county's use of emergency procurement procedures to hire Vienna, Va.-based Centurion Healthcare to take up the inmate health services contract. Wilcher also accused the county manager of keeping him in the dark about the negotiations with the company and of espousing a "cavalier attitude" about the work being done at the jail. "After considerable personal reflection and discussion with my senior management in the sheriff's office, I would like to let you know that I am greatly troubled by the way the county staff has gone about trying to micromanage a critical function in my jail operation," Wilcher wrote in his letter **Smith**. "It is clear that you are trying to run the county taxpayer's detention center from Bull Street, and doing so without the first bit of medical and/or law enforcement experience. You have consistently failed and refused to include me in the discussions, and have acted with disrespect towards the office I hold and with total disregard of the hard work and tireless efforts of my staff."

Asked Wednesday for comment, county spokeswoman Catherine Glasby said **Smith** would not be available to discuss the sheriff's accusations until after the county commission meets Friday. The agenda for that meeting indicates the commission is slated to discuss inmate health services, but no other details were available. Staff reports associated with the discussion weren't expected until "later in the week."

The announcement Monday that the county was negotiating with Centurion marked a change in direction for the inmate health services contract. Up until last week, county administrators had been in talks with the current provider, CorrectHealth of Atlanta, to continue providing the service for a second year. But those negotiations were ultimately unsuccessful and, the press release distributed Monday said, "Chatham County staff, the County Attorney, Sheriff John T. Wilcher, and Correct Health mutually decided not to extend or renew the contract."

Wilcher, however, disputes that he was involved in the decision to end the negotiations with CorrectHealth. In his letter to Scott, the sheriff wrote that he thought a new contract with the Atlanta company was forthcoming - until he was notified it wasn't. "Imagine my surprise when ... I received notification of the firing of CorrectHealth," Wilcher wrote. "I have not interfered in any of the issues that have taken place during the negotiations and have stayed out of it simply to allow for the county as the client to do what they do best." Reached by phone Wednesday, the

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(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

sheriff said he plans to continue to stay out of the talks. But as the elected official charged with overseeing the jail's day-to-day operations, Wilcher said he wants to be kept in the loop on the progress of the talks and on the plans of any company hired to do business at the jail. The sheriff added that he won't allow Centurion staff to operate without first conducting background checks and polygraph tests. "I just want to make sure that when they do the contract I am covered with the proper medical care for the inmates and if not the same staffing, then more staffing," he said.

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William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
September 21, 2017

COUNTY APPROVES PURCHASES TOWARD NEW POLICE DEPARTMENT\ - NEW POLICE CARS, SALARIES ON DOCKET FOR FRIDAY'S COMMISSION MEETING

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

Chatham County staffers have gotten the green light to make the purchases and hires necessary to reestablish a standalone county police department. And based on some of the expenses already incurred, it would no longer be feasible for Chatham officials to continue to negotiate with their counterparts at the city of Savannah to maintain a joint Savannah-Chatham police department, County Manager **Lee Smith** said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

To meet the Feb. 1, 2018, deadline set by the Savannah City Council in a July vote to dissolve the Savannah-Chatham police department, the county commission has already agreed to make purchases that, if the merged department were to be salvaged, would no longer be usable, **Smith** said. In addition, the county manager said, staffers have received bids for other equipment and services, and completed the design of the official seal and badge for the reformed Chatham County Police Department. "I've been giving marching orders," **Smith** said. "We've already sought bids for uniforms, we've chosen the badges, the seals, the colors of the uniforms (and) the car decals. We've got the bids back for weapons we have to purchase - guns, tasers - so we'll be bringing those budget amendments. You'll probably see them at every (commission) meeting or every other meeting from now until winter."

One of those budget requests is going before the commission Friday. Staffers are recommending that commissioners approve the purchase of 20 new Ford Explorer Police Interceptors from Hardeeville, S.C.-based O.C. Welch Ford-Lincoln at a cost of \$538,500. In a memo submitted to the commission along with its agenda for Friday's meeting, Fleet Operations Director Calvin Turner said he was suggesting the purchase because the county police department has "an immediate need for police pursuit vehicles to establish and handle patrolling the unincorporated areas of Chatham County." "In order to have the vehicles ready to patrol, Staff contacted several Ford dealerships to obtain pricing information and availability," Turner wrote. "O.C. Welch confirmed to staff that he has six ... vehicles on the lot which are available for immediate delivery and is expecting the balance to be shipped any day." If approved by the commission Friday, the vehicles would be added to the growing tab for the county police department.

The commission on Sept. 8 approved the purchase of a new phone system and radios for the Chatham County Police Department at a combined cost of more than \$400,000. The board also voted earlier this month to amend its budget for police services and create three new information and communication services positions for the police department. According to a budget amendment on the agenda for Friday's meeting, those ICS positions are expected to cost \$247,900 in the current fiscal year.

In the meantime, staffers reported at the commission's meeting two weeks ago that more than

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

100 applications for various positions in the department had been received and return offers had been extended to the 29 officers on the county retirement plan who now work for the Savannah-Chatham department.

And **Smith** said Wednesday the search firm Stanton Chase has already begun interviewing candidates from across the state and nation to lead the department as chief. "This is a big deal," he said. "It sounds very easy to do this, but there are parts that are very complicated, like getting a chief on this fall and two assistant chiefs. ... (But) since the city gave us the February deadline it's what we have to do."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
June 25, 2017

**ACTION DEMANDED ON 'URGENT' PROBLEMS\ - JUDGE: BATHROOM
OVERFLOW, COLD TEMPS MAKE WORK DIFFICULT**

Author/Byline: Jan Skutch

A Chatham County Superior Court judge has blasted "chronic, unresponsive management" at the county's aging courthouse and demanded, for her fellow judges, that conditions there be given "urgent priority." Judge Louisa Abbot directed her ire at two specific conditions - a malfunctioning air-conditioning and heating system, and a repeatedly overflowing bathroom in an office that houses judges' staff attorneys - at the J. Tom Coleman Courthouse on Montgomery Street. "Surely such conditions would not be allowed to exist in your offices," Abbot wrote in a Tuesday letter to Chatham County Commission Chairman Al Scott and his fellow commissioners. "The judges - on behalf of jurors, employees, and all other users of this building, of this county building - demand that you make the health and comfort of the public and your employees an urgent priority."

Abbot's action was sparked by frigid courtroom conditions for jurors during a weeklong trial for serial rapist Trevon Hendrix this month. Attached to Abbot's letter was a second letter signed by the 14 jurors in the Hendrix case complaining of Courtroom 2-A being "unbearably cold for much of the week. At one point, the temperature was 60 degrees and it rarely grew much warmer," they said. "The inability of the county to have an operating, functional air conditioner made our jury service in a most serious case all the more difficult. It is a disservice to citizens who have jury service, to the court staff and other court personnel and to all others who have to come to the J. Tom Coleman building. "We call upon you as the elected leaders of our county to investigate this matter and treat it as urgent to find a lasting solution immediately so that other citizens are not subject to adverse conditions while serving as jurors." Abbot said she asked the jurors to sign the letter "because jurors and members of the public have had to suffer dramatic temperature shifts for months."

COUNTY'S RESPONSE

County Manager **Lee Smith** said in an email response to Abbot on Wednesday that the county is addressing courthouse problems. "We have been looking at many of these issues and addressing as our budget will allow and developing a long-term plan for the full renovation of the facility as well as addressing the construction of a new trial court facility. Investment in the present facility has to be examined as we plan for the future facility in cooperation with new facility ensuring that taxpayer funds are used wisely." "Your input is always wanted. Communication with myself, my office and my management team is paramount in advance to properly address issues such as these in a timely manner. ... My door has always been open to the judiciary and will continue to be."

CONTINUING CONCERNS

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William Lee Smith
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But Abbot's concerns were just the latest complaints about ongoing problems at the courthouse since it was put in service in 1978. Chatham County renovation efforts at the courthouse to date have bypassed trial floors on the second and fourth trial floors where the air-conditioning/heating systems have frequently been the target of complaints. It leaves some floors of the six-story courthouse too cold, others too hot. State Court Chief Judge H. Gregory Fowler said that on Nov. 14, he sent jurors in a criminal case home "because there was no heat" in the courtroom he recalled being between 54 and 64 degrees. "It happens often enough (to) where it is irritating," Fowler said. "I am sorry about this and I apologize," Abbot told the jurors who arrived in court on June 7 for the Hendrix case to find it 60 degrees. "I am a public servant. I do not like to have anyone uncomfortable. In particular, I don't like to for you all to be uncomfortable. "It's unfair. This is your courthouse. You pay for this courthouse, you and your, you know, ancestors. But we pay for the maintenance of it." She took care to tell jurors she was not criticizing the maintenance department employees "because they have been, personally, extremely attentive and very concerned."

In her letter to Scott, Abbot especially singled out Jack Ingram (the senior building maintenance supervisor is actually Climmie Ancrum) and Solomon Roberts (building maintenance mechanic) for being "unfailingly attentive" to her concerns. "So you know, I'm a Southerner. I don't like cold. So I'm doing everything I can," she told jurors. And, she said, a letter from the jurors to the county commission "I think (will) get their attention far more that I can. The power of citizenry is, thank goodness, still powerful." Such a letter "would make each one of (the commissioners) feel personally responsible for the people who come into this building every day and who are doing serious business ..."

ABBOT TO SCOTT

In her letter to Scott, Abbot said those using the courthouse "have had to suffer dramatic temperatures shifts for months. "The second floor is icy; the fourth floor is broiling. The new first floor courtroom is inoperable due to HVAC problems. To no avail, judges have conveyed our growing dismay about the temperatures," she wrote. "Given the chronic unresponsiveness of management," Abbot contacted Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Burns for help and was told by a county employee, Anthony Stephens (assistant building maintenance and operations superintendent), that "all he had to do was to 'unlock' the thermostats which had previously been locked so that no one could alter the temperature." She called that "shocking news," questioning why, if it was so simple, did the judges have to make repeated complaints about the temperatures? "Why were the thermostats ever locked anyway?" she asked, adding that it "shows something is seriously amiss, not only the temperature but also the utter lack of communication."

Abbot then turned her irritation to the restroom on the fourth floor where eight staff attorneys, formerly law clerks, share a suite. "For several years the toilet in the staff attorney restroom has been overflowing and causing flooding, soaking carpets, causing noxious odors and making work conditions intolerable," Abbot wrote. Those conditions have sickened staff attorneys from "chemicals used futilely to try and disinfect the area. One attorney had to have foot surgery after walking through the infected water."

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William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Efforts by fellow Superior Court Judge John E. Morse Jr. to explain the seriousness of health conditions and the inconvenience to Stephens have not been followed up on as promised, she said, adding that, "Nearly two weeks have now passed with the usual lack of communication." "The toilet continues to overflow, frequently spontaneously, belying the blame placed on the staff attorneys by maintenance," she wrote. "The alternate restroom in the hallway has the same problem so the staff have no other options."

SMITH'S RESPONSE TO ABBOT LETTER

Judge Abbot,

I am in receipt of your letter reference conditions in the courthouse. Your input is always wanted.

Communication with myself, my office or my management team is paramount in advance to properly address issues such as these in a timely manner. We have been looking at many of these issues and addressing as our budget will allow and developing a long term plan for the full renovation of the facility as well addressing the construction of a new trial court facility.

Investment in the present facility has to be examined as we plan for the future facility in cooperation with new facility ensuring that taxpayer funds are used wisely.

Please feel free at anytime to contact me for discussions reference your concerns as they are important to Chatham County and myself. My door has always been open to the judiciary and will continue to be.

Thanks for your input and we look forward to improving the facility for all in Chatham County and thank you for your dedication and service to the citizens of our County.

Respectfully,

Lee Smith

County Manager

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
June 16, 2017

COUNTY STARES DOWN TOUGH BUDGET CHOICES\ - OFFICIALS WEIGH REQUESTS ON TOP OF \$273M WITHOUT CLEAR WAY TO PAY FOR IT ALL

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

The requests have been submitted and most of the recommendations are in, so now it's down to the Chatham County Commission to decide what will get funding and what won't in their upcoming 2017-2018 budget. Commissioners are slated to adopt the budget and set their millage rates when they convene for their next meeting, June 23, leaving them just one more week to weigh final petitions from department heads, community organizations and their constituents. As it stands, they have a lot to consider. Along with the combined \$273 million budget, tax rates and fees recommended by County Manager **Lee Smith** at the beginning of the month, county department heads and local nonprofit organizations during the past couple of weeks have laid out requests for extra funding to cover new staff, equipment, programs and space they say will be necessary to do their work in the upcoming fiscal year. Based on the projected revenue from property taxes and other fees, however, the county commission won't be able to pay for it all.

During a public hearing Friday on the proposed millage rates for the county-wide maintenance and operations fund, the unincorporated Special Service District and the Chatham Area Transit service district, Commission Chairman Al Scott said that while the county as a whole has experienced some growth during the past year, the unincorporated county has been relatively stagnant.

SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICT

In the worst-case scenario proposed by county staffers earlier this month, the commission would need to levy a 1.6-mill increase to the property tax charged to taxpayers in unincorporated Chatham County - the Special Service District - from 4.13 mills to 5.73. All of this additional revenue would cover rising costs for the joint Savannah-Chatham police department as outlined in a recent study on the department's operations. The police study, which was jointly funded for \$109,000 by the city and county last spring, determined the county's share of police costs moving forward had increased by about \$3 million to more than \$17 million a year. In addition, the report indicated that Chatham County owed \$5 million to Savannah for police costs dating back to Jan. 1, 2016. Addressing the unincorporated tax rate during the one of the hearings on the millage Thursday, Gayla Reffner, a resident of the county's 6th District, said she isn't opposed to paying her share for services but only if she receives those services, and so far, she isn't. Despite complaints about illegal shooting ranges and other problems near her property, Reffner said she hasn't received a satisfactory response from the police department. "I think it's unfair you're taxing us for something we're not getting," she said.

As of Thursday, however, it no longer appeared that all of the additional tax revenue will be necessary. **Smith** said after the budget workshop Thursday staff has already found errors in the study that drop the cost of the back-payment to the city by \$1 million. He said staff will continue

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

to comb through the study during the next week to determine if other adjustments are needed before final adoption of the budget. "We will make a recommendation next week but this board is going to have to decide," **Smith** said, adding that if the commission opts to budget below what was recommended in the study, the county and city will have to head to the bargaining table again to discuss the costs before the Savannah City Council adopts its own budget in December.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS BUDGET

Meanwhile, the county is proposing to maintain the property tax rate charged to taxpayers countywide at 11.543 mills. This is the same millage levied in the past two budget years, Scott said, but because of growth in the local tax digest - built up by new development in west Chatham and increasing property values - it is expected to bring in additional revenues. According to the county manager's summary of the proposed budget, the bulk of these additional revenues will cover costs to continue to operate Chatham Area Transit's Paratransit program from one end of the county to the other. The cost for Paratransit is expected to climb by 85 percent in the upcoming budget, from less than \$2.7 million to more than \$5.1 million. "Our demand is going to grow as our population ages," said CAT's Chief Financial Officer Terri Harrison Thursday, despite efforts to cut costs by engaging new scheduling software, applying for grants and encouraging Paratransit riders to use other modes of public transportation. The county is only required to provide the program within CAT's service district, but the commission decided years ago to continue to provide Paratransit service county-wide, regardless of whether the cities participate. The county manager's budget indicates that if the commission opts to continue to operate Paratransit countywide, it could recoup some of the costs by expanding the CAT service district to include all areas of Chatham County not currently paying for the transportation system's service.

CAT SERVICE DISTRICT

In the upcoming fiscal year, CAT's is requesting that the county commission set a millage rate for the transit district at 1.15 mills - an increase of 0.15 mills over the district's current tax rate. Harrison said the hope is that the increase will bring in another \$1.5 million in revenues for CAT, to prevent the need to cut services or staffing.

DRY TRASH FEES

Along with the recommended millage rates, Chatham County staff have recommended a temporary increase to the annual \$43 dry trash fee paid by unincorporated residents. The fee, which could amount to a two-time additional charge of \$100 or a one-time additional charge of about \$130, is designed to help the county recover some of its emergency reserve fund after last year's two tropical storms.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
April 23, 2017

INTERNAL AUDIT FINDS RISK IN CHATHAM'S PUBLIC WORKS' PAYROLL RECORDS\ - COMP TIME CALCULATIONS FALL SHORT OF FEDERAL STANDARDS, ADD UP TO \$17,000

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

Internal auditors reviewing the payroll system at Chatham County Public Works recently discovered deficiencies that put the department at odds with federal employment standards. According to an audit report produced by the county in response to a request under the Georgia Open Records Act, some public works employees built up compensatory time in excess of what local government employees are allowed to earn under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. The internal audit, which reviewed the public works department's payroll from July 2014 to July 2016, was conducted after employees alerted the county to discrepancies between the compensatory time tracked by the department's payroll system and its timekeeping system.

Jeannie Alday, director of Chatham County's internal audit department, said that since auditors reviewed the system most of the findings have been addressed. She said similar issues should be nullified once the county implements a new, automated timekeeping system for all departments. Alday said county officials are reviewing vendors for that automated system now.

A fact sheet provided by the U.S. Department of Labor indicates that federal regulations allow for state or local government agencies to grant their employees comp time in lieu of overtime pay in some cases. Comp time is capped at 480 hours for public safety and seasonal personnel and at 240 hours for all other government employees, including public works. In Chatham County, public works is responsible for maintenance of a variety of county properties, including its roads and bridges, storm drains and solid waste drop-off centers. Throughout 2015, the March 24 internal audit report says, the public works department kept records of comp time in an "off-book," rather than in the official payroll system. The result, the document says, is the two records were never reconciled, and they began to show different comp time balances over time. "The off-book record was not compliant with (Fair Labor Standards Act) limitations on the maximum accrual of 240 hours of compensatory time," the audit report says, "and some employees had accrued significantly higher balances." The report says that as a result of the incorrect timekeeping, about one-third of public works employees were overpaid, costing the county more than \$17,000. Another third of public works employees were underpaid by nearly \$10,000. Two-thirds of employees in the public works department had their comp time or overtime incorrectly calculated and 55 percent of those who were granted comp time weren't eligible to receive it. Using a recently implemented audit rating scale, in which 1 reflects a perfect score and 5 indicates serious problems, the county's internal auditors gave the public works department's payroll system a 4-, or just above the bottom of the scale.

Addressing the audit recently, County Manager **Lee Smith** said he wasn't all that surprised by the findings in public works, where employees often work long hours outside of a typical shift.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Those odd hours, he said, coupled with payroll clerks who aren't fully trained in federal labor standards, can cause some of the problems the internal audit revealed. "First of all, those folks worked and they are due that time, so what we're doing is paying those out. I would say those 99 percent have been corrected and now we have internal auditing and ensuring those people are doing what they're supposed to do," **Smith** said. "Exempt, non-exempt employees, that can be confusing. We have had to back up and try to bring everybody up to date, and say this is how you're classified. It's not that we want to hurt anybody, we just have to be legal."

In the case of those employees who were overpaid, **Smith** reported that the county would not seek back payment. It was not the fault of those employees, he said, that their time was miscalculated.

'DIDN'T HAVE THE TRAINING'

One finding listed by auditors in the report was incorrect comp time balance sheets. Records kept by the public works department were different from those maintained by Chatham County's human resources department. To address this problem, management in public works, with assistance from human resources, will improve its efforts to meet Fair Labor Standards by retraining supervisors, superintendents and managers in comp time requirements. The reports says management will also periodically monitor comp time usage and balances. In addition, auditors found that manual comp time calculations allowed for some employees to use comp time or get overtime pay when it hadn't been earned. Auditors wrote that because the department's practices weren't in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, the county was at risk of violating federal labor laws and incurring fines and penalties.

Rather than provide comment for this article, representatives of the U.S. Department of Labor's regional office in Atlanta provided fact sheets about the agency's process for reviewing FLSA violations. According to those sheets, the Department of Labor has the authority to recover back wages from employers and assess civil penalties. In especially egregious cases, the department can litigate or even prosecute employers found to willfully violate federal employment requirements.

But Alday said in the case of Chatham County Public Works, these actions won't be necessary. The county has already corrected the areas of non-compliance, she said, and there's no evidence that any of the issues found were intentional. "I wouldn't consider it a serious issue," she said. "It wasn't a malicious thing. They weren't aware because they didn't have the training. ... I think definitely this is something that has been addressed by management. ... I have every confidence they have a handle on it now, they understand it and will do some formal training pretty soon."

Internal auditors are scheduled to conduct a follow up review of the payroll system in public works in late July.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
January 11, 2017

MPC SWEARS IN MEMBERS

Author/Byline: Savannah Morning News

Members of the 2017 Metropolitan Planning Commission were sworn-in on Tuesday by Chatham County Superior Court Judge John Morse before their first meeting of the year.

The 14-member board is chaired by Tanya Milton and is responsible for development, urban and transportation planning, historic preservation and much more in the Savannah community.

2017 commissioners are:

Tanya Milton, James Overton, Joseph Welch, George Woods, Shedrick Coleman, Travis Coles, Ellison Cook, Joseph Ervin, Rob Hernandez, Timothy Mackey, Lacy Manigault, **Lee Smith**, Linder Suthers, and Tom Woiwode.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
February 28, 2016

DA: No crime discovered in alderman's gun buyback effort

Author/Byline: Jan Skutch

Chatham County District Attorney Meg Heap says her review of a gun buyback program did not reveal any evidence of "criminal wrongdoing" by Savannah Alderman Van Johnson in connection with a grassroots program here. "Upon review of the GBI investigative report in this matter, I concur with the GBI's assessment that there is no evidence of criminal wrongdoing by Mr. Johnson," Heap said in a one-paragraph letter to GBI officials in Statesboro. Heap's findings, supported by a GBI review she requested last summer, puts to rest a probe of alleged irregularities in the handling of guns from a Savannah gun buyback initiative.

Heap sought the GBI review after discussions with County Manager **Lee Smith**, who made a formal request for a "criminal investigation into the allegation" involving the nonprofit Savannah Youth City Inc. "gun buyback program, process of buyback, securing of firearms, etc." The request, and Heap's conclusion, were sent to GBI Agent-in-Charge Bill Bodrey in Statesboro.

Johnson said Tuesday that his intentions "were clear and they were pure and within the confines of the law. "We have a significant problem in our community that guns are being used by people who should not have them," he said. "They need to get rid of them. ... The most important thing is to get the guns off the streets before they hurt someone." "I'm still collecting them," Johnson said in what he called "a direct attempt to be able to get some of these guns off our streets." **Smith's** request identified "circumstances surrounding the surrendered firearms collected by Savannah City Youth Inc.'s program." "The firearms were surrendered to Chatham-Savannah Counter Narcotics Team to be secured while the matter is being investigated."

"We're doing safekeeping," **Smith** said during a news conference. "We had concerns about it, and I had gotten calls in my office. I had worked with CNT and said to them, I think for the safety of the public, the best thing that could happen ... (was that) CNT hold those (and) inventory them."

Johnson announced the gun buyback program in late November 2016, in concert with the nonprofit. He called it a local gun effort to prevent local gun violence in Savannah and unincorporated Chatham County where there were 280 aggravated assaults with a gun in 2016. That same year, the Savannah-Chatham police recovered 1,092 guns, according to department officials. "Each one of those guns represents a minimum of one life that can be taken if it's in the wrong hands," Johnson said at the time.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News
December 5, 2015

**CHATHAM SELLS WATER SYSTEM\ - \$6.9M WILL HELP STAVE OFF
BANKRUPTCY, HELP WITH REPAIRS**

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

Chatham County has put an end to its public water system. In an 8-1 vote Friday, the Chatham County Commission approved a purchase agreement with Savannah-based Water Utility Management, doing business as Chatham Water Utility, for the majority of the water system - all but the systems at Little Neck Road and Modena Island. The private company will buy the system for about \$6.9 million. The agreement also sets the company up to manage the county's sewer system for about 10 percent of its revenues. The county was unable to sell the sewer system because the city of Savannah treats wastewater from unincorporated Chatham and won't accept it from a private vendor.

With the cash from the water system's sale, the county intends to make repairs to the sewer system, which County Manager **Lee Smith** said is decades behind on its maintenance schedule. **Smith** has said Chatham's water/sewer fund has been operating at a loss for years and would have gone bankrupt within the next two years. The contract requires Water Utility Management to offer positions to county staff affected by the sale and to maintain current rates for three years.

But the contract also left some unknowns. Commissioners Dean Kicklighter and Helen Stone pointed out that with the sale, the cities of Savannah and Pooler, which have provided a backup water supply for customers of the Runaway Point and Hunter's Ridge systems, will no longer do so. "It's just a concern that I have if we don't have a backup here," Stone said Friday. Kicklighter added that based on a text message he received from Pooler City Manager Robbie Byrd on Friday morning, the county should consider negotiating with the city of Pooler for the sale of the Hunter's Ridge system. In that way, he argued, the county could ensure that customers of that system never pay more for service than their fellow Pooler residents. Citing a desire to hold off on the purchase agreement to meet with Pooler, Kicklighter was the sole vote against the contract Friday. Other board members charged that Pooler had an opportunity to express an interest in the system's purchase when a request for proposals was issued earlier this year.

Water Utility Management President Mark Smith said he's optimistic of reaching an agreement with the city of Savannah to provide backup water in the event of a failure. He said he's also optimistic his firm will work out an agreement with Savannah for the future acceptance of wastewater from his company. Commissioners also voted to sell the Little Neck portion of the water system to Savannah-based Consolidated Utilities for \$63,000. County Attorney Jon Hart on Friday estimated he could bring an agreement for the future operations of the Modena Island well to the commission by its next meeting on Dec. 18. The county has been in negotiations with property owners on Modena for the future of that system.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
September 29, 2015

FOLLOW-UP AUDIT SHOWS IMPROVEMENTS IN BUILDING SAFETY DEPT.

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

A follow-up review of the Chatham County department that oversees building inspections and issues occupational tax certificates reveals that staffers have corrected some of a number of cash-handling problems identified last year by internal auditors. The Building Safety and Regulatory Services Department also is responsible for code enforcement and the tags for animal vaccinations.

According to the document produced by internal county auditors in May, five of nine internal control deficiencies in the department had been addressed since the first report, including problems with the security of the department's finances and the lack of daily deposits. Four issues remained, however, including a concern that the department's operations coordinator had too much oversight of the department's finances. This finding had not been corrected in the eight months since the first audit was completed, despite the department head's written response that he intended to "implement all the recommendations identified in the report."

The follow-up audit is dated May 15 - the same day the Savannah Morning News put in a request for any and all internal audits completed since the start of the year. The follow-up audit wasn't produced, however, until another request for internal audits was made Sept. 14.

WHAT IMPROVED

Last September, internal auditors with Chatham County sent a memo to the county manager that reported a slew of problems at the department. Among the concerns were missing receipt books, unsecured registers, an unlocked safe, cash deposit shortages and late deposits. In the response letter included with the audit, director Gregori Anderson promised to improve those operations. County Manager **Lee Smith** said in an interview in March that administrators would be monitoring the department to ensure improvements.

Although one follow up has been completed, Assistant County Manager Michael Kaigler said Friday administrators will continue to require additional follow-up audits at building safety. "One of the thing we saw is a disconnect. We didn't have departments doing continuous communication," **Smith** said Friday. "(Kaigler) is doing regular meetings with all these department managers, decision makers. ... That's really helping because those disconnects mean mistakes. We're able to avoid those situations because we're all talking now."

According to the most recent audit of the department's operations, building safety staffers have completed a required annual risk assessment - the first in at least two years. In addition, the department began maintaining animal registration records as the county's records retention policy required. Locks were installed on the cashier's drawer and bank deposit slips are now stored in the department's safe. The department also reconciles and deposits money collected daily. Unlike

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
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(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

the original audit, the follow-up makes no mention of cash shortages or missing funds, late deposits or poorly secured funds. "We actually met with the Homebuilders Association, and although I can't speak for them, they were very complimentary, saying we were acting in a timely manner ... that things were going well," **Smith** said. "We do know we're going to take a look at moving animal control ... (and then we) won't be collecting the animal control fee out there. We'll consolidate up front and be a bit user friendly."

WHAT DIDN'T IMPROVE

A recurring finding in audits of building safety has been the lack of segregation of duties. Last year, auditors reported no change in this condition since the previous report, and a similar note was made in the follow up - despite assurances from the director that closing the department's Chatham County annex location "eliminated the segregation of duties issue." This time around, the concern was that the department's operations coordinator continued to be involved in every level of handling and depositing cash, a practice that had led to cash shortages in the past. The operations coordinator had also continued to process and record payments from a personal office - despite previous audit recommendations and instructions to conduct all processing at the cashier's booth - "up to and including ... the day before auditors reported to Building Safety."

"An effective system of internal control over cash receipts requires that the reporting and depositing functions be separated; this decreases the likelihood of errors (or) misappropriation," auditors wrote. "Conversely, the likelihood of errors and possible misappropriation increases when employees responsible for handling these cash receipts also maintain the records used to document such receipts."

Assistant County Manager Linda Cramer said this concern could be explained by a staff shortage at the time of the internal auditor's visit. The department was without a cashier during that period, she said. "There is a cashier up there now, and I think she's working out really well," Cramer said Friday. Meanwhile, auditors found that in some cases, receipts had been erased from the system without explanation and without management's knowledge. In some cases, daily reconciliation reports were inaccurate, missing or incomplete. The auditor also pointed out that the department had ordered another receipt printer, even though an assistant county manager had instructed them not to last August.

The report suggested more in-depth reviews of businesses to which occupational tax division issues permits and an update to the department's cash-handling policy. The county commission voted in January to require all departments that handle cash to develop written financial policies and ensure these policies are followed. In an email last week, Chatham County Finance Director Amy Davis reported that most departments had followed through. Some, she said, are still working on their policies with the help of a consultant because of changes to their software or recommendations in their audits. The internal audit department is reviewing the policies one-by-one, Davis wrote.

A final concern in the follow-up audit about an "outdated" computer software used by the

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

department wasn't thoroughly reviewed, auditors wrote, because the county was in the process of replacing it. Cramer said she wasn't sure this aspect of the audit report will ever be fully resolved. All totaled, of the 16 recommendations made by auditors last September, the department by May had implemented nine of them, the follow up says.

NEW ISSUES

The follow-up identified two additional areas of concern. In two separate cases, customers of the building safety department were subjected to charges that violated county policy. The occupation tax department had implemented a \$5 fee for businesses seeking copies of their occupational tax certificate, despite a county ordinance that sets the cost at 25 cents per page.

Customers paying by credit or debit card at the office, meanwhile, were being charged convenience fees, despite a recent change to county policy that waived these fees for walk-in customers. Cramer said these charges have since been rectified. In addition, she said, outside auditors are in the process of reviewing the operations at Building Safety and Regulatory Services as part of their annual audit of Chatham County. "They've been out there for a couple of days," Cramer said. "I'm interested to see what they're going to say. They're the ones that caught on to this in the first place."

Smith said county managers in the meantime are continuing to hold regular discussions with various departments and are planning regular visits to those departments. "We need to be more visible as a management team," he said. "I think that helps with morale. It's tough when you're in a department and you're seen as having problems. People have pride in what they do and they want it done well."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

[CB&A Note: To view this Lawsuit in its entirety, please follow the link below.]

<https://casetext.com/case/santifort-v-sue-guy-in-her-pers-capacity>
September 8, 2015

Santifort v. Guy
Civil Action No. 4:14-CV-225-F
09-08-2015

DONNA R. SANTIFORT, Plaintiff, v. SUE GUY in her personal capacity, **LEE SMITH**, in his personal capacity, JOE GURLEY, in his personal capacity, STEVE KEEN, in his personal capacity, and COUNTY OF WAYNE, NORTH CAROLINA, Defendants.

James C. Fox Senior United States District Judge

ORDER

Plaintiff Donna Santifort ("Santifort") sues Defendants Sue Guy, **Lee Smith**, Joe Gurley, Steve Keen and County of Wayne for damages arising from her termination of employment. The defendants have filed three motions to dismiss, all of which have been fully briefed. For the reasons more fully stated below, the motions to dismiss are DENIED.

I. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

Santifort initiated this action by filing a complaint in this court on December 5, 2014 [DE-1]. She filed an Amended Complaint [DE-4] later that same day. In the Amended Complaint, Santifort alleges she was terminated in violation of her First Amendment rights and wrongfully discharged in violation of public policy.

II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

III. DISCUSSION

All of the Defendants have filed motions to dismiss, which have overlapping arguments. All Defendants contend that Santifort has not stated a First Amendment retaliation claim. Specifically, Defendants argue that Santifort's speech and petitions were not protected by the First Amendment because they were not made in her capacity as a citizen and did not involve a matter of public concern. Defendants Guy and **Smith** also argue the claims must be dismissed because Santifort has not adequately alleged causation, and because they are entitled to qualified immunity.

As to **Smith**, the court notes that as a matter of state law, he had the authority to terminate Santifort's employment. See N.C. Gen. Stat. § 153A-82(1); see also 6A N.C. Index 4th § 35 ("In counties that have a county manager, the county manager is responsible for suspending or removing county officers, employees, and agents and is required to do so in accordance with any general personnel rules, regulations, policies, or ordinances that the board has adopted."). This, combined with the allegation that Santifort was terminated in **Smith's** office at a meeting he

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

convened gives rise to the plausible inference that **Smith** terminated her employment. **Smith** makes much of the fact that Santifort has alleged that he signed a letter thanking her for her comments, and that she alleges that his ouster was the goal of the scheme by fellow Defendants Guy, Gurley and Keen. The fact that **Smith** thanked Santifort for her comments in September does not foreclose the idea that he may have preferred her not to speak; moreover, although the different Defendants may have had differing reasons for their desire to silence Santifort, it does not preclude the inference that Smith terminated Santifort in retaliation for her critical remarks at the County Commissioner meetings. Santifort will, of course, have to gather evidence to support these inference and contentions, but at this juncture her allegations are sufficient.

Guy similarly contends there are no factual allegations showing that she was involved in Santifort's termination, and accordingly the claims against her in her personal capacity must be dismissed. Under § 1983, "it must be affirmatively shown that the official charged acted personally in the deprivation of the plaintiff's rights." *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841, 850 (4th Cir. 1985) (internal quotation and citation omitted). It is true that unlike Smith, there is no indication that Guy had the statutory authority to terminate Santifort's employment, nor are there allegations that she was present for Santifort's termination. Nevertheless, Santifort alleges that Guy, along with other defendants, used her as a pawn in a scheme to ultimately oust Smith as manager, and that once that scheme on its way to being accomplished, they had no further need of her. Santifort also alleges that two days after her outburst at Guy, she was terminated without giving a statement.

In this case, Guy and **Smith** argue only that Santifort has not met her burden in alleging facts that make out a violation of a constitutional right. For the reasons the court already has discussed, the court disagrees, and finds that the record precludes a ruling on qualified immunity at this time. Moreover, neither Guy nor **Smith** proffer any argument as to why they have met their burden in showing that the right was not clearly established at the time of the incidents giving rise to this action. Accordingly, the motions to dismiss are denied on this basis. B. Wrongful Discharge Claim

IV. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the Motions to Dismiss [DE-17, 26] are DENIED. The Motion to Dismiss [DE-12] filed by Defendants County of Wayne, Joe Gurley, and Steve Keen is DENIED as to the § 1983 claims and ALLOWED as to wrongful discharge claim. The Clerk of Court is DIRECTED to continue the management of this case. SO ORDERED. This the 8th day of September, 2015.

/s/ _____
James C. Fox
Senior United States District Judge

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
September 2, 2015

'WHISTLE-BLOWER' CHALLENGES FIRING

Author/Byline: Jan Skutch

An attorney for a fired Chatham County employee is challenging the termination, arguing she was a "whistle-blower" who was fired for calling attention to "serious financial deficiencies" in the county office.

Shaundra D. Smith-McKeithen, 45, was terminated by the county's Building Safety and Regulatory Services Department on Aug. 27, 2014, after an internal audit revealed multiple problems - going back for years - in management of funds and permits. Those problems were never corrected.

Attorney Bobby Phillips, in an ante litem notice of claim last week, said the termination was wrongful. "The basis of this claim is my client's contention that she was fired because she was a 'whistle-blower,'" Phillips said. "I understand Ms. Smith-McKeithen was in a probation status as a new employee; however, it is my contention that the Whistleblower Act trumps any spurious attempt by the county to avail itself of a defense on that basis."

An ante litem letter is required for a person who plans to sue a governmental unit. Phillips said he was notifying the county to give them time to investigate the claim and avoid litigation. Smith-McKeithen has announced she will run for the Savannah city council in the 5th District, opposing incumbent Estella Shabazz.

According to Phillips, his client notified County Manager **Lee Smith** to "serious financial deficiencies" in the department and her complaints were validated by an audit performed Sept. 24, 2014. "Apparently the deficiencies had existed as far back as 2012 when there was a similar audit," Phillips said. "Those deficiencies were never corrected."

The Sept. 24 audit report found concerns regarding the handling of payments similar to issues discovered in 2012 but never corrected. **Smith** attributed the department's problems to a lack of proper training and policies, as well as inadequate staffing.

Smith-McKeithen, who supervised the issuance of business licenses in the occupational tax office, was given her termination notice on Aug. 27, 2014, after being hired in mid-March. She said at the time she was being fired after she tried to fix a culture that fostered problems within the department.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News (GA)
June 27, 2015

**CHATHAM BUDGET TO HELP USHER IN PROJECTS\ - PUBLIC WORKS, MORE
STAFF, COMPENSATION PART OF TAX INCREASE**

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

The Chatham County Commission on Friday adopted a combined \$463 million budget and maintained its millage rates, a move that will increase taxes but also kick off long-awaited projects. For the maintenance and operations property tax - the property tax paid countywide - commissioners set the millage rate at 11.543 mills, the same rate paid by Chatham County property owners in 2014. Because the county opted not to roll back the millage rate this year, growth in property values will reflect a 4.37 percent increase. Last year, the county commission reduced the M&O millage to its current level by distributing \$4 million in excess special purpose local option sales tax funds. That SPLOST rebate has since been depleted, but County Manager **Lee Smith** said Friday increasing the millage won't be necessary to get additional initiatives started.

During the upcoming budget year, which begins July 1, the county will be hiring staff and buying equipment for the public works and building safety departments, **Smith** said. The result will be more building inspectors for areas that have been under-served, he said, more right-of-way maintenance and better upkeep of local parks - all while keeping the millage rate flat. These property taxes will feed some other changes in the \$170 million general fund, including higher compensation for county jurors and grand jurors, an increase to workers' salaries and some new positions, according to the county's 2016 budget proposal.

In addition, the commission maintained the millage rate for the special service district - the amount paid only by property owners in the unincorporated area - at 4.13. Growth in property values will increase the amount paid by property owners in the unincorporated county by 1.37 percent. This millage rate helps to balance the \$30 million special service district fund. The SSD budget includes \$14 million for Chatham County's share to operate the Savannah-Chatham police department plus another \$250,000 for the county to hire a consultant to review the police department's operations and determine the county's true share of costs and ownership. Despite these costs, the county manager reported that Chatham County will pay about \$2 million less for police service in the upcoming budget year than it did in the current fiscal year. The commission also maintained 1 mill for the Chatham Area Transit service district, which, after accounting for value growth, is a 4.71 percent increase over the amount paid in 2014.

Commissioner Helen Stone, a member of the CAT board of directors, reported Friday that for the first time in many years, CAT has not ended the year with a deficit. "This is one of the first times they have had a budget operating in the black, and they're paying down their line of credit," Stone said. "I think the staff at Chatham Area Transit needs to be commended for that."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
May 24, 2015

TOP BOSS: A YEAR IN THE LIFE\ - COUNTY MANAGER HAS TACKLED CHANGE, PROMISES MORE STILL TO COME

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

Sitting in his office at the old county courthouse on Bull Street on the day of his first anniversary, May 12, Chatham County Manager **Lee Smith** says it's hard to believe a year has gone by already. Much of his time as the county's chief appointed official has been spent responding to questions and comments from the public or meeting with his counterparts in the county's various municipalities. He also meets regularly with his executive team of department heads and Chatham Commission Chairman Al Scott. On many of his days outside the office, he says he found himself driving around, getting acquainted with his new community and the places that came up in discussions with county commissioners or team members. He acknowledges that a lot has changed since he took up his post, and, he says, more change can be expected in the year to come.

THE POLICE MERGER AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH SAVANNAH

On May 13, just a day after **Smith** sat down to discuss his first year as county manager, he joined with Savannah City Manager Stephanie Cutter to announce a new proposal to fund and operate the Savannah-Chatham police department. It was a step forward, he told those gathered at the press conference, not only because it showed how far negotiations over the police department had come, but also because it showed how cooperative the two governments had become. It was a far cry from the comments he was making at commission meetings late last year when he bemoaned the city's lack of responsiveness. "When you've got a relationship between individuals or corporations or governments, you've got to build loyalty and trust," **Smith** says. "It doesn't just happen. Stephanie and I have had multiple meetings ... Now we have a relationship where we can trust each other. It's the same thing with the other managers. We now meet quarterly with all the city managers. We all get together and discuss items, and I think that's key. It's just the communication."

Chairman Scott says his goal to improve these relationships and it seems to be working. "He's been holding meetings with the managers of all the townships and the manager at the Landings. She represents a community of roughly 10,000 people," Scott says. "We're just quietly trying to improve our working relationship with all the cities. (**Smith**) buys into that, so his agenda is my agenda, and my agenda is his agenda. He's not out freelancing. That's what I like about him. He spends a lot of time reaching out." Of course, not every meeting with the local city managers is going to be devoid of conflict. Each of these managers answer to a collection of elected representatives, all of whom have their own priorities and agendas. But the conflict, **Smith** says, isn't always a bad thing. When push comes to shove, community leaders in Chatham and the surrounding counties have shown they can band together. Look, for instance, at the joint development authority created in what was ultimately an unsuccessful bid to woo the Swedish auto manufacturer Volvo. "With Volvo we were disappointed, but it proved one thing. We were

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

able to put a joint development authority together ... in less than 60 days. That's amazing," he says. "We're all disappointed about Volvo, but that's case in point, we were all prepared. Bring on the next project."

FINDING AND SOLVING PROBLEMS

Only a few months after settling into his new role with Chatham County, the new manager found himself facing audits and lawsuits that showed systemic problems in some county departments. Internal and external audits revealed that the Building Safety & Regulatory Services department was missing money, slow to cash checks and not operating as auditors had recommended. Not long after, an attorney for the families of workers killed in the 2008 explosion at the Imperial Sugar Refinery filed suit against the county, alleging that a former probate court clerk had stolen thousands of dollars set aside for the children of the deceased. Most recently, Sheriff Al St Lawrence announced the firing of nine deputies, some of whom, he said, contributed to the death of an inmate on New Year's Day.

These are problems, **Smith** says, but they're also opportunities for improvement. The county manager says many of the issues he's found in different departments can be traced back to inconsistencies in oversight and not following policies. In the case of the courts, **Smith** says, the county in the past had been involved only as far as paying for services. Despite contributing substantially to the operation of the local courts, Chatham officials haven't had much oversight. This, he says, needs to change. "Courts are not necessarily our area. However, we have responsibility," **Smith** says. "We pay money for some of those services, so we should have more oversight for the money we're spending. We have some great judges, but we have some flaws, and those are being dealt with by the right authorities." A new financial policy approved by the county commission in January should help county departments avoid future problems, he adds. Each department head was instructed to draft financial policies that included internal controls, and finance director Amy Davis has said they must be in place by the start of the next fiscal year.

Departments that handle cash will be under video surveillance, **Smith** says, for the safety of the county's customers and for its employees. "Everybody's heard me say, people respect what you inspect," he says. "I think (the problem) has been inconsistent policy and our inability to inspect the departments on a regular basis (but) now we're doing that. One of the things you're going to see this year is we're upping the security systems. I'm going to have a camera that (records) every transaction."

A NEW APPROACH TO BUDGETING

Much will be said about Chatham County's budget during the next few weeks, as the county commission prepares to adopt the spending plan for the next fiscal year. It's the second year the county has crafted a zero-based budget, a more thorough process that requires justification for every expense. Because he started with the county after much of the grunt work on the current budget was complete, this will be the first year **Smith** will be truly involved in planning for the county's fiscal year. Unlike this year, there will be no contingencies in the budget for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1. While the county previously provided for department heads to make emergency expenses without getting clearance from the county commission, Smith says

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

the removal of contingencies will free up about \$700,000. "People are a little nervous about that, but it forces you to budget better," he says. "(A contingency) falsely inflates the budget. I think it needs to be a true budget." Along with the removal of nearly all the contingencies, **Smith** says, you'll see more focus on capital projects in the upcoming budget. "We definitely have to look at our capital policies," he says sternly. "We do not fund capital up front. We fund capital on the back end. We fund capital by, 'Let's see what's left over.'" The lack of planning for future capital purchases has left the county in the uncomfortable position of telling taxpayers they're going to have to wait for services. And developing a capital plan isn't going to be immediate. **Smith** says it will take at least five years to get a capital budget in good working order, and even then the county may have to look at borrowing money to get the projects going.

Also stay tuned for a greater reserve fund.

Smith says he's been given the directive by Chairman Scott to improve the county's bond rating. He says doing so will require enough reserves to fund the county for 90 days and a more fiscally conservative approach to running county government. "I wanted fiscal responsibility," Scott says. "That's an umbrella phrase, but I don't think we do a good job on planning capital projects or setting aside funds to meet those needs. We usually respond to stuff, rather than plan for it. "The county has a AA bond rating, I want to move it to AAA. You just can't get there overnight. ... Much of what the county manager is doing is heading us in the right direction. You can't accumulate anything short term. We're looking at it long range. I want to keep taxes low as possible, I want to eliminate duplication of services, I want to improve the county bond rating, and where we can, I want to support local business. (**Smith**) understands that."

CHISELING AWAY AT THE PROJECT LIST

Smith says he expects to get more county projects started in his second year. A major special purpose local option sales tax project, reconstruction of Memorial Stadium, will kick off in the next year. The county is still determining how it will proceed with the stadium. Should they build it elsewhere or reconstruct it? The county this year also anticipates kick-starting renovations at the J. Tom Coleman Courthouse with SPLOST funds, part of a larger, three-phase project that will result in a new court complex on Montgomery Street. Chatham officials are weighing funding the project through a public-private partnership, and a review of the bids for such a partnership is under way. "You're going to see a lot of SPLOST projects starting," **Smith** says. "I definitely think you're going to see some capital that will impact the general public. My board made it clear to me that when this last SPLOST was adopted there was still SPLOST money on the table that we haven't spent, and we should have. We're putting bids out, and we're going to get these projects started. "People voted on some projects years ago and have not seen anything happen. Why? If there's a reason, tell folks. But let's not sit on things. Let's get it done. I'm excited about getting some of these things to happen." Another major upcoming project will be the sale of the county's water/sewer program, he adds. The enterprise has lost funds for years, **Smith** says, and creates a disparity between unincorporated neighborhoods that have the service and those that do not.

INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PUBLIC

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Smith says a surprising facet of his job is the amount of time he spends dealing with the day-to-day problems of Chatham County homeowners. He is faced with these challenges more now than in any other government position he's held. He recalls a time recently when the county was contacted by a local property owner who had dealt with flooding in her backyard for years. "She felt like nobody was responding to her - the city, the county," he says. "I took out like 10 people from different agencies. We went out and looked because we owed her an explanation for what was going on." Not only did it benefit the property owner in question, **Smith** says, but it gave him an opportunity to see how county employees are interacting with the public they serve. He says he stresses to his employees that the public deserves to be respected, to be heard when they have a problem. "Genuinely listening to them, caring about what's going on with them, is important. I hear too much about government for the sake of government, and none of us are entitled to these jobs. We're here to work for 200,000 and some people," he says. Chatham County Commission Chairman Al Scott's opinion of the county manager's work during the first year: "I'm very happy with his performance over the last 12 months, and I think it's the beginning of hopefully a long-lasting relationship with the county. I think he's energetic, he's proactive. I think he's going to move the county in the area of increased technology. "He has a number of things on his plate, and he brought with him when he came here things he was doing at smaller counties that he's going to implement."

Three months after County Manager **Lee Smith** took up his post with the county, he listed these priorities. Here's how he's done so far:

- * Development of a long-term strategic plan: The county commission in November approved a contract with the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition to gather data and develop a strategic plan for the community. The plan, which will be known as Chatham Community Blueprint 2035, will span 20 years. It is expected to be complete by this December.

- * Reorganization of Animal Control: Included in the framework for a new agreement to operate the Savannah-Chatham police department is a provision that places the animal control division under the county manager's oversight by July 1, 2016. **Smith** has said the department at that time will be civilian operated and will likely rely on partnerships with organizations like the Humane Society for Greater Savannah.

- * Service request system: The county manager has eyed the city of Savannah's 311 system as a model for a similar program in Chatham County. He said he envisions a mobile application that would allow the county to track the source of its requests for service and provide for photos and other data. This has not yet been developed.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
May 1, 2015

**EMERGENCY EXPENSES AT HEART OF BUDGET\ - COUNTY'S \$200M PLAN
INCREASES TRANSPARENCY**

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

Chatham commissioners on Thursday got their first look at a \$200 million budget proposed to operate the county for the upcoming fiscal year. The spending plan presented by finance director Amy Davis includes nearly \$170 million in the general fund and \$30 million in the county's special service district. It anticipates a 1 percent increase in the county tax digest. Though the county is continuing the thorough, zero-based budgeting process that began with this year's budget, the upcoming budget marks a shift in the county's spending philosophy. Previously, the county had built in contingencies to provide department heads with flexibility to make emergency expenses, but the proposed budget for the upcoming year has cut all the contingencies - about \$700,000 worth, Davis said.

County Manager **Lee Smith** said this was an intentional change to increase transparency in budgeting process. "It was one of my policies to eliminate contingencies," **Smith** told the board during its non-voting workshop. "If I need to make a change in the budget, I need to come to you."

The change will require more than just the county manager to present his need to the board, commission Chairman Al Scott said. All of the county's constitutional officers such as the sheriff and district attorney will be required to justify their emergency expenses before they're allowed to make them.

Another first is the development of a capital improvement plan, which the county manager expects will track capital expenses and keep them in line with the commission's forthcoming strategic plan. Currently, **Smith** said, the county isn't funding capital projects on a regular basis and the result is a backlog of needs that have not been addressed. "Capital assessment management is something our team has talked about a lot," **Smith** said. "There are hundreds of millions of dollars of capital needs that the county is saying we need that are not funded. ... That's not how you fund capital. You incorporate that in a long-term capital reserve and you begin to put money away to pay for that."

Other expenses expected during the next fiscal year, which runs from July 1 to June 30, 2016:

* The budget includes a pay increase for jurors and grand jurors. In February, the county signed off on a request from Superior Court Administrator Crystal Cooper to grow the allowance for jurors from \$10 to \$15 for the first day of service and from \$20 to \$30 for grand jurors and for jurors sworn in on a panel. This will be paid for out of the general fund.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

* The general fund includes a 1.5 percent increase to the salary table and considers new positions, including a public communications officer and audio/video technician.

* The board is still weighing two options for the \$30 million budget for the special services district. One option includes a \$14 million contract with the city of Savannah to co-fund the Savannah-Chatham police department. The other provides for \$16 million to restart and operate a county police department. No agreement has been signed by either side to continue the joint department, and a scheduled presentation on a framework proposed for a new agreement did not take place Thursday.

Smith said he expects officials from both sides to release a joint statement related to a new merger agreement early next week. That will include a new division of costs for Chatham County Recorder's Court.

Scott said the county has incurred about \$2,000 in expenses to hire a search firm to find a county police chief in the event negotiations don't pan out. The expense for a county police department is expected to decrease after the initial startup costs. **Smith** said the commission will get a more thorough view of the budget document during its meeting Friday.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Savannah Morning News
April 11, 2015

**COUNTY: MAYOR MISSES MARK \ DESPITE LETTER, OFFICIAL SAYS POLICE
MERGER STILL NEEDS WORK EVEN THOUGH SOME ISSUES RESOLVED**

Author/Byline: Kelly Quimby

As Chatham County administrators prepared to head back to the bargaining table with officials from the city of Savannah, county officials on Friday were making it clear that an agreement over the future of the Savannah-Chatham police department wasn't as close as city officials had made it seem.

In the latest chapter of the public back-and-forth between Savannah and Chatham County officials, county manager **Lee Smith** said the two governments have not agreed upon a framework for a new police merger agreement - despite claims to the contrary made by Savannah Mayor Edna Jackson in a letter delivered to Chatham Commission Chairman Al Scott earlier this week. There are still points to be worked out between staff members, **Smith** said during an impromptu discussion of the subject at the county commission's meeting Friday.

It's true that some issues have been resolved, Chairman Scott said. Scott said he discussed many of the items in Jackson's letter - including cost sharing for animal control, mosquito control and for property crimes investigations - with her during a regular lunch meeting earlier this month. But something was missing from her list, the chairman said. "One of the things we discussed at lunch that's not in her letter is that after two years, we would move to an evidenced-based funding formula - no ifs, no ands, no buts," Scott said. "That's not in the letter. Outside of that, those are points we discussed."

The county in recent months has proven unwilling to budge on this funding proposal. Arguments against it have been that it would prove too expensive for city residents. That, Scott said, is not the county's concern. "I want this to be as clear as a bell. The county's policing responsibility is to the unincorporated area of Chatham County," he said. "This isn't about crime-fighting in Savannah. We have no responsibility for it. Period. This must be emphasized. "I just wanted to make it clear ... I don't have any responsibility for policing anything in the city of Savannah."

Addressing pleas for third-party mediation that have come from officials in Savannah and the business community, **Smith** said the county has received few to no specifics about how a mediation would be conducted.

Chatham officials previously said an agreement with the city needed to be reached by the end of March, but **Smith** told Commissioner Dean Kicklighter on Friday the "drop dead date" for an agreement will have to be sometime this month. It has been nearly seven months since the county voted unanimously Sept. 26 to end the current merger agreement and set an 18-month deadline to reach a new one.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Last month, the county voted to approve a contract with Baltimore-based Stanton Chase to search for a county police chief at a cost not to exceed \$65,000. Scott reported that while money hasn't yet been spent, work to develop a profile for the right candidate has begun. The search firm will be billing its work at an hourly rate.

Smith said a new chief could be in place as early as August or September, and the county could then move ahead with its plans to rebuild and operate a department at an annual cost that Smith said will be less than what the county is currently paying for police service under its agreement with Savannah.

Smith told a skeptical Commissioner Yusuf Shabazz he'd bet on his position with the county that the savings would come in by at least \$2 million a year. "We've looked at the model ... I think we will be well within \$2 million (in savings)," **Smith** said. "We've had our experts look at it. You will pay less than you're paying today. I will guarantee you, I will place my job on the line you will not (pay more)."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Savannah Morning News (GA)
May 9, 2014

COUNTY'S NEW BOSS STARTS MONDAY

Author/Byline: Marcus E. Howard

Following retiring Chatham County Manager Russ Abolt's final county commission meeting today, his successor is set to begin work Monday - though a salary agreement has yet to be finalized.

Lee Smith has not signed and returned the county's one-page compensation offer, which was sent to him via FedEx along with paperwork and a copy of the county's employee manual. **Smith** has been dealing with a family illness in Durham, N.C., but is expected to travel this weekend to Savannah, said Al Scott, commission chairman.

As there is no agreement to consider, the commission will likely take up **Smith's** salary at the May 23 meeting, said Scott, who has been working with the county attorney to determine whether **Smith's** employment benefits are subject to commission approval. **Smith's** nomination as county manager was approved unanimously by the commission on April 11. The details of his compensation package have not been disclosed. However, he will be paid less than he made as county manager in Wayne County, N.C., Scott confirmed.

Considered among North Carolina's highest paid county managers, **Smith** received \$221,408 annually, plus a \$12,000 travel allowance, as part of a six-year contract that was terminated earlier this year when he and Wayne County reached a \$325,000 settlement over his severance package following his resignation.

According to Scott, the salary range for the Chatham County manager position was between \$175,000 and \$220,000. "I said to him that I wasn't willing to match his salary in North Carolina, at least not the first year, because based on performance you want to be able to reward somebody," said Scott. However, **Smith** has been offered an open-ended contract that could be renegotiated in July 2015. And should he be forced out of office this calendar year, under the terms of the contract **Smith** could be entitled to six-months of severance pay, said Scott.

In addition to a transportation allowance, **Smith** - who turns 50 this month - would be entitled to benefits under the county's defined benefit retirement program based on salary and years of service, self-insured health plan and life insurance coverage of one times his salary.

Meanwhile, Abolt, who has been cleaning out his corner office of 26 years this week, will work for the county as a paid consultant over the next few weeks, not to exceed 90 days. He will, according to Scott, be compensated based on his nearly \$190,000 annual salary, which could amount to a little more than \$700 a day. In 2012, commissioners granted Abolt a retirement package that included \$30,000 a year for six years after his retirement, plus coverage of his and his wife's health, dental and life insurance premiums, as well as a \$200,000 non-term life

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

insurance policy. Abolt also elected to continue participation in an independent defined contribution plan.

As county manager, **Smith** will oversee about 1,544 county employees and a half-billion-dollar county budget. Approximately 98 percent of the fiscal year 2015 budget will have been completed by staff by the time **Smith** sits down next week at his new desk in the Old Courthouse on Bull Street. A budget workshop with county officials has tentatively been scheduled for June 3.

One of **Smith's** first tasks will be to meet with county employees in various departments and later with Scott and the two assistant county managers to discuss what it will take to successfully work together. Scott and Abolt were scheduled to meet Thursday to talk about his consultation. "That's why Russ is so invaluable so that he can sit down with him and just go over all that," said Scott.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Wayne-Wilson News Leader (Fremont, NC)
February 13, 2014

Smith steps down as Wayne Co. manager

Author/Byline: Barry Merrill

The dance that began six weeks ago that would lead to **Lee Smith** leaving his post as Wayne County Manager ended suddenly Monday afternoon. County Commissioners adjourned from a session to discuss school funding to an executive session to discuss with their attorney an offer to resign from Mr. **Smith**. When they reconvened in open session, a unanimous vote approved paying Mr. **Smith** \$325, 000 in settlement of his employment contract and agreement to leave the office. The agreement which was made part of the public record and released to the public states all parties agree not to make written or verbal statements that hurt the personal or professional reputation of those involved. All questions to the county on the matter are to be directed to County Attorney Borden Parker.

Mr. **Smith** had been the target of County Commissioner Joe Daugherty for many months, criticizing the costs of his contract which the former Democrat-controlled county board had approved. In October, Daugherty made a motion to fire Mr. **Smith**, but none of the other commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

In late December, the county granted an emergency leave of absence to the county manager, by some accounts reacting to stress from pressure from the board. In early January, his status changed to a paid leave of absence, with Commissioner John Bell, the lone Democratic holdover from the former board, voting against. Mr. Bell offered the motion Monday afternoon to accept the resignation agreement.

In January Mr. **Smith** retained an attorney to represent him in negotiations with the county, and his attorney publicly asserted if the county fired Mr. **Smith**, the county would owe Mr. **Smith** \$1.4 million under the terms of his employment contract.

A motion by Daugherty was not on the agenda for Monday's meeting, but a resolution had been anticipated. Chairman Wayne Aycock had appointed a working group to begin interviewing potential candidates to assume an interim manager position. They had begun interviews on Friday. Commissioners Ray Mayo, Bill Pate and Ed Cromartie are serving as that working group. They had a second interview on Tuesday. Commissioners are hopeful that an interim manager can be named by the end of February, as the county should be deep in the budgeting process at this point of the fiscal year. As there has been no deputy or assistant county manager on the staff, it is widely anticipated that the county will have to recruit someone from another county to take Mr. **Smith**'s place. The NC Association of County Commissioners has been contacted for help finding suitable candidates.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Wayne-Wilson News Leader (Fremont, NC)
January 9, 2014

Wayne Co. Manager is suspended

Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

Wayne County Manager **Lee Smith** was suspended with pay last Friday during a special meeting of the Board of Commissioners. The board voted 6-1 with District 3 Commissioner John Bell casting the lone vote against the measure, which was decided after a 2½ hour closed session meeting.

No one on the board would say the reason for the suspension and when or if Smith would return to his post. Smith had been on a leave of absence since Dec. 17 when At-large Commissioner Wayne Aycock was named acting county manager. Smith was not at the most recent meeting, held in the Wayne County Administrative Building. County Attorney Borden Parker said the closed session meeting was necessary because it involved attorney-client privilege and the board would be considering "the performance and fitness of county employees."

Smith had seemingly no problems during his first decade plus time in the manager's box. But that changed when the board switched from a Democratic to Republican majority a year ago. Six months later, the board voted on whether to keep **Smith** or remove him.

Upset about a payroll issue, District 6 Commissioner Joe Daughtry made the motion to void the contract with **Smith** at the board's July 16 public meeting. Daughtry cast the lone vote against **Smith**. And since the board refuses to give specifics to the public, rumors, guessing and misinformation abound. What is known is that **Smith** makes more than \$200, 000 annually and may not return based on his life situation and/or the board's decision.

When Aycock took over, he said **Smith's** leave of absence was temporary. "Lee has asked for some time off and I think it's well deserved," Aycock said. "It's only going to be a couple of weeks."

Wayne County does not have an assistant county manager or for that matter anyone with a track record of being responsible for nearly every aspect of county business, including financial matters. The Democratic board gave **Smith** a six-year contract on Jan. 1, 2012.

The county can terminate the contract by giving **Smith** a 30-day notice, but would have to pay his salary and provide benefits, even if **Smith** were suspended from his duties. The county would then have to pay **Smith** a one-time payment to cover any accrued vacation and personal time and also pay his salary and benefits for 12 months. The board set no timetable for **Smith's** return, nor did it say he would return.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Mount Olive Tribune (NC)
November 27, 2013

Commissioners get \$1.87 million shopping spree

Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

The demise of the North Carolina Eastern Region group has turned into an economic development tool for Wayne County. On Tuesday, Nov. 19, the Wayne County Board of Commissioners decided to take advantage of money it gave to the organization to fund four projects for a cost of approximately \$1.87 million.

County Manager **Lee Smith** and District 3 Commissioner John Bell, a member of the Eastern Region board, put a quick plan of action together that includes the purchase of a 45-acre site in the Mount Olive Industrial Park, 50 acres for a veteran's cemetery, equipment for Wayne Community College and renovations at the Wayne Executive Jetport. The four projects will be funded fully and Wayne County can also borrow up to \$576, 000 with the one thirteenth-allocation portion from the 13 counties in the Eastern Region. The five-year loan has a 1 percent interest rate.

"These are long term investments that will do good for the county and citizens in different ways," **Smith** said. "This money is an investment in our future. We tried to target how we use the money, so that it would have an impact for 20 to 30 years."

Bell was instrumental in making sure the county would get its share, an amount that was collected from license plate sales since 1998.

Smith drew up the action plan, which he said couldn't tackle an extremely costly project, such as infrastructure concerns, but one that would help several places in the county.

Bell said the Eastern Region group is closing in June 2014 "Let's make this clear, this is \$1.8 million that already belongs to Wayne County, but indeed, Mr. Bell is getting his wish," District 1 Commissioner Ray Mayo said. "This could set us on a pace for economic development and our No. 1 concern, creating jobs. But at the same time it will increase the quality of life for all of Wayne County. It also helps Seymour Johnson (Air Force Base) with flight encroachment."

Smith has worked out a deal to purchase the property in the Mount Olive Industrial Park for \$420, 000. The county already owns two plots of land next to it, which are 47 and 24 acres. All three plots are located behind Hwy 55's headquarters (formerly known as Andy's) and between Old Mount Olive Highway (SR 1938) and U.S. 117. Mt. Olive Pickle Company owns the property on the backside of the county's land. Fifty-plus acres for the cemetery, located along Long's Plant Farm Road, would cost \$462, 600.

Welding equipment that will be stored and used at Wayne Community College was a part of the Wayne Economic Development Alliance's proposed Manufacturing Center of Excellence. The

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

county will spend nearly \$300, 000 on welders, \$130, 000 on simulated welding Smith training equipment, and \$275, 000 on a waterjet machining center and \$69, 500 on a CNC mill that works in conjunction with WCC's engineering lab. Workers and students will then be able to use computer-aided manufacturing, or CAD, with computer-aided manufacturing (CAM). The hands on CAD-CAM will allow students to learn about the realities of modern industry. "These are the jobs that are in manufacturing today," said District 5 Commissioner Bill Pate. "And they're good paying jobs. I'm hoping some day we find a bigger facility to put this in."

Smith said discussions on that matter are already on the table. He also said the money from the Eastern Region has to be used quickly. "I had been advised to draw it down as quickly as possible," **Smith** said. "So we're looking to having it done by spring to June."

At-Large Commissioner Wayne Aycock said the plan for spending the money was well devised. "All four projects are worthy, and I'm most excited about the WCC because it has educational opportunities and all that equipment," he said.

While **Smith's** spending plan passed unanimously, not everyone was happy it took flight so quickly. District 6 Commissioner Joe Daugherty expressed his dismay in not being in the loop as the plan took flight. "My concern is there wasn't any discussion on this and I wish I were at least asked for my input on how the funds would be used," he said. "This is the first time I'm hearing about this. It seems to me everyone on the board should be

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Wayne-Wilson News Leader (Fremont, NC)
February 21, 2013

Audit report praises state of Wayne County's finances

Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

The recently elected Wayne County Board of Commissioners received an audit report Tuesday morning for the fiscal year that ended in June 2012. The report came from Paul Nunn and Danna Layne, accountants from Nunn, Brashear and Company. The twosome delivered good news on how the previous leadership had built up the county's reserve funds and that its credit rating had skyrocketed in recent years. Nunn said the county's finance department was awarded a certificate of achievement for excellence in financial report. "It's probably the 16th year in a row you've received this award," he said. "Your finance department has done a very good job."

The unqualified opinion from the accounting firm, the highest ranking given during an audit, showed many positives for the county. "Our debt ratio is very, very low compared to other counties," said County Manager **Lee Smith**. "This has helped us get a high rating and enables us to get loans and helps out in obtaining grants and money."

The county's reserve and general funds are extremely healthy. Nunn said the county does not have much in terms of outstanding capital loans, with the exception of those that funded new buildings at Norwayne and Eastern Wayne middle schools, which came via Qualified Construction School Bonds. It increased the county's long-term debt to \$13.77 million.

The county's net assets increased by \$1, 918, 372, mainly because of governmental activities. The unassigned funds in the general fund checked in at \$28.1 million, or 34 percent of total general fund expenditures. The state mandates that eight percent of the general budget be set aside as unassigned. Two Republicans questioned why the unassigned fund was such a high percentage. "Your officials in the past wanted an additional 14 percent, which is not that uncommon," Nunn said.

Final budgeted revenues for the general fund were \$97.9 million, while actual expenditures were \$83.8 million. Wayne County gets 55 percent of its governmental revenues via property taxes, nearly 21 percent from human services and 17.6 percent from sales tax. The county spends 32 percent of its governmental money on human services, 31.7 percent on education and almost 20 percent on public safety.

In the coming weeks, five Republicans will get a bigger input on the budget as **Smith** and his staff prepare the 2013-14 fiscal year. The commissioners will meet with every department head in the county on March 11-12. **Smith** said each department would be given about 15 minutes to talk with the board. The board has also scheduled a meeting with the Wayne County Public School board and high-ranking officials on March 15. These discussions will likely center around the school system's capital improvement projects, specifically buildings. Other topics at the meeting included: - The board talking with County Planning Manager Connie Price about

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

having his department approved small subdivisions, rather than bring them to the full board. Price said this would not include subdivisions or plans that affect the schools, fire departments or sheriff's office. They will revisit the topic at a later date.

Commissioners questioned a \$200, 000 budget amendment for the detention center. **Smith** said the money would hold the county over through the year in terms of paying to have prisoners outsourced to other facilities. He said the jail is always over its capacity of 200, usually by at least 40 inmates. He said that figure has spiked in the past six months and could rise even higher. "If it got as high as 60 it will take more," **Smith** said. "When you hit the 240 mark, the jail inspector starts writing you up."

The board also balked at forgiving \$26,000 that is owed to the county by Wayne Opportunity. The nonprofit handles the county's recycling and uses residents as workers. CEO John Chance said the company has laid off 18 staff workers, but still has 55 employees and 96 clients. Chance said one program has been eliminated and that the company owes \$27, 000 in back taxes. **Smith** said the county has an interest in keeping a relationship with Wayne Opportunities, mainly because it saves the county money.

Chance said the current price of \$54 a ton it receives for recycling materials is too low. "We're losing money until it goes over \$60 a ton," he said. "We've stopped our contributions to employees' 401K programs and are making every effort to stay in business." **Smith** said the county used to subsidize Wayne Opportunity but saves \$75, 000 to \$100, 000 annually from its agreement with the nonprofit. - Commissioner Joe Daughtery suggested the county look into options on residents who file late for present value use of land. The board has granted every late application in the past four months, and has to deal with the concern nearly every time it meets. The board approved a final resolution authorizing a grant programs for ACX Pacific Northwest, Inc.

In another matter that required more discussion, the board talked about whether it would sign off on a grant that would create a walking trail from Wayne Memorial Hospital to Wayne Community College through a medical park and residential district in Goldsboro. The county owns the land and would use it as part of the 25 percent match (\$200, 000). But the deal is contingent upon the city of Goldsboro taking responsibility for liability concerns of the trail. County Attorney Borden Parker said the county could get off the hook, but since it owns the land, it could be subject to responsibility in court, even after signing off to Goldsboro.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Princeton News-Leader (NC)
October 18, 2012

Wayne agrees to pay EMS workers time and a half for overtime hours

Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

The Wayne County Commissioners approved a measure on Tuesday that pays emergency workers time and a half for overtime. The move was made months after numerous problems were found in the new payroll system used to tabulate paychecks for about 60 emergency workers. In the new system, adopted in July, many workers were both overpaid and underpaid. Bob Jackson, chairman of the Wayne County Republican Party, instigated the topic during the public comment portion of the meeting. "We continue to hear about problems and they have not been solved," he said. "Now I'm hearing some employees have obtained the services of an attorney. We're led to believe other departments have problems as well. And a \$200 gift of forgiveness for overpaid, why don't we give that to the underpaid?" Emergency worker Rich Swinson III, who lives in Princeton, said all employees have heard are promises that are not kept.

"Today, it was proposed by email by Mr. **Smith** (County Manager **Lee Smith**) we will get straight pay for up to 40 hours and all the hours over (are) time and a half," he said. "We welcome that as long as the hourly rates don't change. We would also like to pay back money in equal increments over the course of the coming year."

District 1 Commissioner Ray Mayo jumped on the topic as the first speaker during a time when commissioners can comment openly on any matter. "We need to approve time and a half today," he said. "I'm told Mr. **Smith** has already done that, so I ask the county attorney if this isn't something this board should have done? I'm not against what is being done, but the protocol. The commissioners should have been involved." Borden Parker, Wayne County Attorney, responded. "In my opinion, the board would need to approve it, and if it costs more, a budget amendment would have to be made," he said.

Smith said he felt the board was behind the move. "My understanding was in concept you accepted it," he said. Determining overtime has been the biggest concern, according to **Smith**. "It's only for EMS workers that we used Chinese, or fluctuating overtime came into play," he said. "I've never been able to figure it out. There's no incentive to work more and get paid less (per hour)." **Smith** said the problems would cost the county money. "Probably at least another \$200, 000 through this year," he said. "But we can afford to do this, and we owe these employees. We have the money, and I will bring an amendment to you in January."

"Somewhere down the line, that guessing about overtime has to stop," Commissioner Jack Best said. **Smith** agreed, but added there are unknown variables. "We have to have a cushion, such as in the case when there's a hurricane or disaster," he said. "We're not going back to the old system, we'll just inputting the data differently. We will be stronger after we come out of this." Emergency workers filled the seats at the previous two meetings. On Tuesday, about 10 showed up. They clapped when the proposal was approved.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Wayne-Wilson News Leader (Fremont, NC)
June 7, 2012

Smith presents budget proposal to Wayne County Commissioners

Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

Wayne County Manager **Lee Smith** laid out his proposed 2012-13 budget Tuesday morning to commissioners. The board's initial reaction to the budget seemed to be positive, as everyone liked the proposal, trusted **Smith** to make the right decisions, or felt it was best to discuss any differences they had during the June 21 workshop. **Smith** said many big capital projects are being put into the budget, while others needed to be discussed. The budget must be in place by June 30. Among the wish list projects were:- Helping Wayne Community College with its power plant woes and possibly providing a new building.

- Helping the Division of Social Services - Helping the Agriculture Extension Center - Providing money for needed renovations at Wayne County Public Library's Goldsboro branch and the need for a hub library in the northern part of the county to match what is offered in Mount Olive and Goldsboro.

- Assisting in the master plan of the Wayne Executive Jetport.

"I'm asking the board to take a look at these, so we can choose our next step," **Smith** said. "We have to plan our future based on needs, mandates and money." The budget he has put together is chock full of projects that the county has already started, and a few that were once covered by the state or federal government, but are now in the hands of county officials. The \$159 million budget will not include a tax increase. The number of county employees has dropped from 927 in 2003 to 700, and **Smith** has asked all department heads to make 2.5 percent cuts. He also said there would be a job freeze on new employees. "I don't know if we can do that, but I'd like to try," he said. "These are painful and tough economic times. There's a limit to the freeze in that, for example, we have to replace someone like a DSS worker who has an unbelievable caseload. By law, we can't shift that to another employee." Big items included in the budget include: - Replacing about \$120, 000 lost from funding the Day Reporting Center, which **Smith** said saves the county about \$850, 000 annually.

Setting aside about \$1 million for renovations to the jail. Work started this week, but it will not include repairing the roof, which could cost another \$1 million. Spending about \$300, 000 to add quick response vehicles for the Emergency Services and additional help. The move is in lieu of adding another EMS station, and to keep the response time to about eight minutes. Paying out 2.7 million and \$3.85 million for building projects for the Service on Aging and Mount Olive's Steele Memorial Library, respectively. Investing \$400, 000 for the fuel farm at the Jetport. Giving \$500, 000 to the Development Alliance. Giving \$250, 000 to the Wayne County Public Schools for money lost from North Carolina's Low Wealth allocation. **Smith** worked out a deal where \$16 million in renovations at Norwayne and Eastern Wayne middle schools were paid for without raising taxes or stepping on anyone's toes, using lottery funds to pay for the principal and local funds to pay the interest, which is later replaced by federal funds. The projects will be complete sometime this year.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

The News Argus
March 11, 2012

Smith elected to lead state panel

Author/Byline/Byline: Staff Reports

Wayne County Manager **Lee Smith** has been elected chairman of the state Department of Health and Human Services Waiver Advisory Committee.

The committee works in aiding development of performance and outcome measurements of the new local management entities and of managed care organization members. The 20-member committee is comprised of mental health providers, medical personnel, agency staff who work with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illness and substance abuse challenges, local management entities (LMEs) and managed care organization (MCO) members.

"I'm excited about participating on a committee that will be the catalyst to a better Mental Health provider system to our clients in North Carolina," **Smith** said. "The major directive is to set measurable actions ensuring proper patient care at an affordable cost."

The committee is responsible for reviewing quarterly and annual report summaries of LME-MCO performance; providing consultation around local and statewide system goals; reviewing outcome measures and trending data; and will assist with problem identification and resolution. "Mr. **Smith** is a perfect fit for this position," said Wayne County Commissioner Chairman John Bell. "He was instrumental in pulling the Eastpointe organization together and has expanded it from four counties to 12 counties."

Bell said that **Smith's** outstanding job as Wayne County's manager and as chair of Eastpointe has gained him recognition and respect throughout the state. "He's known to be well-organized, likable, fiscally conservative, while having the ability to get things done," Bell said.

Smith has been the Wayne County manager for the past 10 years.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Mount Olive Tribune (NC)
September 22, 2011

Commissioners discuss Eastpointe merger, approve new hazard plan

Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

Wayne County Manager **Lee Smith** briefed county officials on work being done that will combine three health care Managed Care Organizations during Tuesday's meeting of the county commissioners. Wayne County MCO provider is Eastpointe, which also serves Duplin, Lenoir, and Sampson counties.

Smith said the state has required many of the MCOs across the state to merge, resulting in fewer organizations that state authorities need to work with. **Smith** Eastpointe is trying to become the lead agent in a merger with the Benson Center, which serves Edgecombe, Greene, Nash, and Wilson counties, and Southeastern Regional, which serves Robeson, Bladen, Scotland, and Columbus counties. Eastpointe has a Medicaid population of 58, 600. The Benson Center serves 51, 168, while Southeastern Regional serves 68, 912.

Smith said the new 12-county organization would be more cost effective and look to stay out of "owning and maintaining buildings" to cut down on overhead. "Statewide, they are looking to trim the number of MCOs to seven or eight," **Smith** said.

Another benefit of the managed care merger approach is that the new organization can re-invest any money it saves. "In the old system, all the money that was left at the end of the year went back to the state," **Smith** said. "We are also not required to have programs that work well in one area, but not another. We might find it works well in Lumberton, but not needed here, and vice versa." The new group is hoping to be formed by Jan. 1, 2013. Based on today's figures, the Medicaid population base total would be 178, 680, with an available Medicaid funding pocketbook of \$40 million.

Smith assured the commissioners that no one would come back looking for money from Wayne County in the event of overspending. He said a recently passed N.C. House Bill does not hold county governments responsible or financially liable for such expenditures. **Smith** said neighboring Johnston County was asked to join the new configuration, but has declined, choosing to stay with a partnership that includes Cumberland and Wake counties.

Commissioners approved the Hazard Mitigation Plan following a public hearing where no one spoke up on the issue. The plan outlines in great detail what needs to be done in emergency situations such as floods, thunderstorms, drought, tornadoes, and hurricanes.

No one spoke up during another public hearing on the county's appropriation of \$206, 220 in funding for the Rural Operating Assistance Program. The programs give money for transportation needs for the elderly, disabled, and poor people with medical needs. About \$62, 000 goes for the elderly and disabled, \$36, 00 for an emergency transportation assistance

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

program, \$560, 000 for a rural assistance program for people without public assistance to pay for their transportation needs, and \$28, 000 is geared to the rural general public.

Other topics at the meeting include:

The board approved five people to Goldsboro's Municipal Planning Organization. Residents appointed to the board include J.E. "Pete" Parks, Vicki Simmons, and Ann Ham, all of Goldsboro. LaGrange's Jo Ann Summerlin, of the Wayne County Planning Board, and Cooperative Extension head Kevin Johnson, of Pikeville, were also selected.

Pamela Holt and Angie Boswell were named as primary and secondary agents on Wayne County's Emergency Management team. Wayne recently got approved for individual assistance from FEMA, and many of the money decisions will fall under the authority of Holt and Boswell.

Smith said second notices on property taxes would be mailed to those who appealed their revaluations within two weeks. He said there were about 1, 800 appeals, and that nearly half will see changes when they open their letters. Any appeal beyond that would have to come within 15 days.

The board approved rezoning 29 acres in Pikeville to Residential-Agriculture 20. The land, which the town of Pikeville released to county authority, is owned by Brian Marcoux. Three subdivision plats were approved. They included one lot on the north side of Old Grantham Road owned by Darryl and Karla Thompson; one lot on the east side of Mt. Carmel Church Road that is being developed by Dale Perry, and one lot on the west side of Price Road near N.C. 55 for developer Lynn Davenport.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Wayne-Wilson News Leader (Fremont, NC)
August 18, 2011

Board accepts bid for Norwayne and EW projects, turns attention to funding

Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

The Wayne County Board of Commissioners took another step forward with building projects at Norwayne and Eastern Wayne elementary schools on Tuesday by agreeing to allow County Manager **Lee Smith** to accept the lowest bid and seek financing options from banks. Monteith Construction's bid of \$14, 535, 000 for both schools earned that company the contract, edging out two other companies by less than \$200. Three firms also bid separately on the two schools as separate projects, but **Smith** said Monteith's bid on both schools was the most cost-effective. The bid came in low enough to include items listed on the project's alternate list, which included \$12, 000 for mobile units at Norwayne and a \$250, 000 update to climate control projects for the school's cafeteria and gymnasium. Eastern Wayne's \$227, 000 climate control project for its gymnasium was also included.

Before Monteith, which has offices in Wilmington and Charlotte, can start, financing has to be arranged. The total bill for both projects is \$16.4 million. **Smith** said the county could now seek \$15 million in Qualified School Bonds. Lottery money and local funds -mostly sales tax receipts - will be used to pay the principal, while federal money can be used to cover the interest, which is about \$750, 000 annually. The county must pay the interest and wait to be reimbursed by the federal government, however. "These reimbursements are on a year-to-year basis, so we have to be prepared if something happens and we don't get reimbursed," **Smith** said. County Attorney Borden Parker said this could save the county \$11.7 million over the term of 14 to 17 years. The bonds have to be sold before December or be forfeited. The county then has a three year three year period to spend the proceeds and complete the project.

Smith said he originally planned to seek bank financing and get approval from the Local Government Commission in November, but because of fluctuating rates, he decided it would be best to do it in September. "There will still be some funds remaining from the lottery money, and I've advised (Superintendent) Dr. Stephen Taylor to allocate it for a solid project to protect it," **Smith** said. Both Eastern Wayne and Norwayne will have old structures demolished, and new twostory classrooms built. The county will use school buildings and property as collateral. Then, the county will lease the buildings and land to the schools until construction warranties expire. **Smith** said the county did not have put up collateral for its last three school projects. A public hearing on the resolution to seek Qualified School Construction Bonds is in the works. Commissioner John Bell asked **Smith** if there was a sales tax advantage if the county owned the schools. **Smith** said the checks and balances are such that it would likely not make sense.

Other topics at the meeting included: · New Wayne County Cooperative Extension Director Kevin Johnson spoke to the board about having his new title and also the title of Crops Agent. **Smith** said that one man cannot do both jobs, and that farmers in the area have bombarded him about the importance of a Crops Agent. The county pays 75 percent of the crops

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

agent's salary. Johnson said the state has not filled the position in part due to its 12.3 percent cut, and that 80 vacant positions have not been filled. The board is sending a request letter to fill the position to North Carolina State University, legislators, and other key parties. **Smith** said the county sends \$30, 000 annually for the position, and asked the board to consider paying the entire salary.

- **Smith** distributed new literature to the board concerning the policy of naming county properties and facilities.
- **Smith** told the board that the Wayne County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan it approved in June was approved by the N.C. Office of Emergency Management and FEMA. The delay in getting it approved was because the city of Goldsboro was not included. Goldsboro is now included, joining Mount Olive, Fremont, Pikeville, Eureka, Walnut Creek, and Seven Springs.
- The board approved a fireworks demonstration in Pikeville on Sept. 10.
- **Smith** said a Veteran's Medical Clinic would be established in Goldsboro. "With the many veterans in the area, this is great news," he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Mount Olive Tribune (NC)
June 9, 2011

Citing shortfalls, Wayne plans to raise taxes
Proposed budget for 2011-12 includes 2.35-cent tax hike
Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

The price of living in Wayne County is going up. County Manager **Lee Smith** is asking taxpayers to dig deeper. There is a 2.35 cent increase in the 2011-12 budget that county commissioners got to look at for the first time on Tuesday. The increase would provide and additional \$1.3 million for the county's coffers. A person with a property value of \$100, 000 would pay an additional \$23.50 annually. **Smith** said it would pay for future debt service.

Smith has several big ticket items on the table, including \$15 million for projects at Norwayne and Eastern Wayne middle schools, \$13.8 million to renovate a building on William Street for the Health Department, \$3.5 million for Wayne Community College, \$3.85 million for Mount Olive's library renovation and a new senior citizen's building in Goldsboro.

The Commissioners, who didn't have time to read the budget in its entirety, didn't question the tax hike. They will quiz **Smith** on it on Monday at 8:30 in the commissioner's room on the fourth floor of the courthouse. "The \$1.3 million can be accounted with the \$450, 000 we need for social services, balance." Many residents are also getting socked with property tax increases via revaluation.

Every residence and all but a few businesses in Goldsboro have been mailed revaluations. They won't start paying the new rates until September. The \$158 million budget keeps a hiring freeze for "non-essential employees," cuts service hours at the libraries, could delay response time by law enforcement, and will mean longer waits at health and human services. "The state continues to cost shift to county governments," **Smith** said. "Our focus remains on providing high quality service, provided in a professional manner and as The price of living in Wayne County is going up.

County Manager **Lee Smith** is asking taxpayers to dig deeper. There is a 2.35 cent increase in the 2011-12 budget that county commissioners got to look at for the first time on Tuesday. The increase would provide and additional \$1.3 million for the county's coffers. A person with a property value of \$100, 000 would pay an additional \$23.50 annually. **Smith** said it would pay for future debt \$250, 000 in health costs, loss of lottery money and state retirement," **Smith** said. "Just these are 2.35 cents. We can't even do these without going into the reserve fund "The \$1.3 million can be accounted with the \$450, 000 we need for social services, \$250, 000 in health costs, loss of lottery money and state retirement.. the state continues to cost shift to county governments." quickly as possible. "**Smith** said that while he felt Wayne County was in good shape, it was being cautious. "The outlook for the county's financial condition can be characterized as cautiously optimistic as we see the first signs of what is expected to be a recovery," he said. "While some revenue sources are experiencing flat or declining revenues,

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

others are showing early signs of improvement. We cannot be sure if or when revenue growth will return to historical levels if every, which makes planning for the future speculative and maintenance of reserve funds even more critical at this time." After **Smith** delivered the proposed budget, he was confronted with another problem, Senate Bill 756, which would require all persons placed in jail to come up with a 15 percent bond payment. **Smith** said passage of the bill would fill the jail in no time. "We'll have 300 to 350 (inmates) by late summer, and at \$50 to \$75 per day, we will have to build a new jail," he said. "We had that planned in the next 7 to 10 years, but not this soon.

Smith said it would cost about \$75 million for a jail to house 500 prisoners. "The day reporting centers and electronic devices work, and it's a lot cheaper," **Smith** said. Our local legislators get it, but four legislators in the western part of the state have stonewalled us. "The debt service for a new jail is \$3 to \$3.5 million a year, which by itself is a 12 cent tax increase. We're not talking about violent criminals here, either. A jail bond issue would put our capital improvement plan on its head."

Wayne County Sheriff Carey Winders, who has gone four years without having money for a new deputy in the county's budget, said he's out of room already. "We have 245 people today and a facility that should hold 200," Winders said. "If misdemeanor offenders are kept in jail it will go out the roof. There's also no federal or state money for meth lab cleanups, so it will be up to us to pay that cost."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Wayne-Wilson News Leader (Fremont, NC)
January 13, 2011

Wayne Co. manager asks commissioners to hold off on new building plans

Author/Byline: Michael Jaenicke

Wayne County Manager **Lee Smith** has saved taxpayers plenty of money over the last five years via creative financing, aggressively seeking grants and knowing how to form partnerships. Through it all, progress has been made. Now, it appears as if **Smith** is holding back. At the last County Commissioner meeting he told the board to put a temporary hold on plans for a new building for the Health Department and Services on Aging. The move came just before the board was to put its stamp on a \$838,480 architectural contract.

Smith's concerns were the state's sluggish economy and a projected \$3.7 billion budget gap. While Wayne County's unemployment rate was 8.5 percent, statewide it stood at 9.9 percent. Fifty-two of 100 counties have double-digit numbers. And hardly any talk about money is done in 2011 without mentioning the Republicans as a new force in Congress, which was a Democratic majority for the past two years. "I just came back from a conference and the forecast doesn't look promising," he said in taking the building off the docket. "I am talking May or June. I'm afraid to sign any contracts starting a project. This is a \$13 to \$14 million project. I've been pushing for this but I will tell you I am fearful until I see what the state economy and state budget is going to do. I'd rather hold off."

As usual, **Smith** was trying to make something better and also save money. His department's plan was to renovate the Mason's Department Store on North Walnut Street in Goldsboro. The \$13 to \$14 million project looked like a bargain compared to building one for \$40 to \$45 million from the ground up. So a year of talking up the plan now sends it to the back burner.

But **Smith** didn't back off a long ago proposed plan to spend \$15 million for capital improvements at Norwayne Middle and Eastern Wayne middle schools. The \$15 million plan is divided equally between Eastern Wayne Middle and Norwayne Middle schools. The plan in Pikeville is to build a two-story classroom, air-controlled gymnasium and renovate the current cafeteria. The plan at Eastern Wayne calls for a two-story classroom and administrative building, and air-controlled kitchen and gymnasium. But the bonds must be sold by Dec. 31. The county will then have three years to complete the projects. Commissioners plan to visit each school later this month.

Most people in the Norwayne district have heard expansion talk so much they've become "doubting Thomas" about whether it will ever be done. Talks about it started at the county level in 2006. Norwayne Middle has more than 1,100 students and is the biggest and most crowded school in Wayne County. Additionally, Norwayne was built on a flood plane, and there has been talk about constructing a building on higher ground the school owns. Both schools have buildings that are aged and in need of repair/demolition. The system is still hurting from projects last year at Brodgen Primary, Mount Olive Middle and Greenwood Middle.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Wayne County Superintendent Steven Taylor also showed concerns about the economy. He's worried about jobs being sliced. But the plan is to begin construction in the spring and have it completed within a year. Taylor said his system is already down 100 positions, and fearful of what 5 to 15 percent cuts in the budget will do to his staff. About \$4 million was cut from his state budget the past two years. "We've been told our state agencies will take a share of the hit and education is a big part of that," Taylor said. "Any way you slice it, when you cut personnel, you cut services to children, and it makes remaining personnel you have do everything they can to get the job done." But Taylor remains optimistic about the building projects and the collaboration they have with county officials.

Commission Andy Anderson said money was tight and warned school officials about adding "padding" to the two projects.

Smith saved the county \$750, 000 to \$800, 000 in interest that will be reimbursed by the federal government. **Smith** seems to think the bid process and sale of bonds will move rapidly.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

News Argus
May 5, 2010

County bond rating goes up
Author/Byline: Steve Herring

Wayne County could realize millions of dollars in interest savings in coming years and find itself more attractive to economic development as the result of action by Standard and Poor's Rating Services. County officials were notified late Friday that S&P has raised its long-term rating on the county's general obligation debt from "A+" to "AA-." "It is hard for me to believe in the hard economic times we are going through that we have had a bond (rating) increase," county commission Chairman Jack Best said during the board's Tuesday session. It is the first such increase in at least 25 to 30 years, County Manager **Lee Smith** said.

"It shows that the county, county management, county board and finance people have done a great job," said consultant Robert High, vice president of Davenport and Co. and past secretary of the N.C. Local Government Commission, during a telephone interview. "They have been fiscally responsible. They have maintained the financial health, in fact have improved the financial health of the county, which is all for the betterment of the residents of Wayne County. "It's hard to put absolute terms on a bond upgrade. For one thing, it should be something that the folks of Wayne County should be proud of. I think it is very helpful to the businesses in the community. It gives them, and should give them, comfort that they are not going to be caught with any surprises from their government trying to dig out of a hole, so to speak. I think from a business standpoint a rating is also good for industrial recruitment for the same reason -- it shows stability and strength in the government." The upgrades do not happen by chance, High said. "Upgrades are not freely available, they are rare. I don't know that you ever anticipate an upgrade, especially in a down economy."

An upgrade also brings benefits, just like a higher credit score benefits the consumer, High added. "From a credit standpoint, the better your credit rating, as with individuals, you should be able to borrow money at a lower cost and the availability of credit in a tight credit market is improved. The benefits are many. The benefit is more derived from the reasons that they got the upgrade -- the fact that the government is well managed and you don't have tax rates bouncing up and down. It is consistently managed. So they are able to step up and help in bad times."

Smith called the news, "a dream come true." "We know we have capital programs in the future," he said. "This shows that we are stable. Companies that invest in areas look at things like this because they want to go to areas where you have secure services. Also, in future interest this saves us money. This will save us millions of dollars over the coming years."

Reading from the S&P report, Best said the rating reflected the county's:

- * Continued growth and diversification of the local economy
- * Strong financial management and growth in the level of the general fund balance reserves
- * Low overall debt burden and rapid amortization of debt.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The report cited the county's consistent "sound financial operations which have contributed to consecutive operating surpluses since 2003." In particular it noted the 2007 unreserved fund balance of \$22.9 million or 27.1 percent of expenditures. By 2009 the balance had grown to \$26.5 million or 31.7 percent.

The growing fund balance has been a favorite target of critics of the board. "In the past we have been criticized for the fund balance," **Smith** said. "What are people going to say if we grow fund balance? The story is we stuck to it because it is fact, you have got to have it to survive."

Smith said the county knows it will have future debt and is preparing for it, adding that rating agencies are looking at how that is being done. "A lot of things, including the economy, are out of the county's control, but you can prepare for it," he said. "Commissioners have allowed us by hiring the right experts, putting the policies in place, putting reserves in place -- we were prepared for the downturn. We are weathering it, but we have a long way to go." **Smith** also had high praise for Pam Holt, the county finance officer. A number of other factors have played into the county's economic picture, **Smith** said.

"Our saving grace has been the state, by virtue of Cherry Hospital, the federal government with Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, and growing manufacturing in the area -- AT&T, AAR," **Smith** said. "I think that to me validates the investment we have made in economic development and the investment we made in things like WORK Keys because that has produced jobs, and if you have a good stable labor market the positions are going to come and they have started coming. I think those things have put us over the top."

Also of importance is the new U.S. 70 Bypass that is under construction that will connect to Interstate 795 that connects to Interstate 95. "Business and industry coming to our community should say that this is a community that is stable and growing and that is reasonable in what they charge and how they do business," he said. "This is positive all the way around."

The county has been able to diversify and the goal is to be even more diversified, he said. "That is what the Wayne County Development Alliance is working on, the chamber," **Smith** said. "So you don't worry about one single industry that closes their doors tomorrow that would shut you down. We have been able to suffer through economic hits and loss of jobs."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

News Argus
August 13, 2009

Smith told Price to hold off on hearings

Author/Byline: Steve Herring

Wayne County Planning Director Connie Price might have been hesitant Tuesday night to say who told him not to schedule community meetings to discuss zoning, as had been ordered by the county Planning Board. But County Manager **Lee Smith** had no such problem. "I told him," **Smith** said Wednesday. The issue came up after Planning Board member Steve Keen reminded fellow board members that they had agreed to hold a series of public meetings starting with one on the U.S. 70 Bypass interchange at Wayne Memorial Drive. The meetings were to gather public input and interest in zoning. Keen asked Price if he had scheduled the meetings and Price replied he had been told not to but declined to say who ordered him to hold off.

At issue, **Smith** said, is the danger of zoning being confused with a multitude of other issues currently facing commissioners. In addition, county commissioners need to be aware of what the Planning Board would be sending out beforehand, he said. **Smith** said it was not an attempt to censor the Planning Board, but rather to allow commissioners to be aware of what was going on when people began calling about the meeting. The Planning Board's first attempt at having a zoning meeting earlier this year was the victim of such confusion, he said.

The original concept was to have a series of meetings across the county starting in the areas along U.S. 70 west at Rosewood and the U.S. 70 Bypass and Wayne Memorial Drive interchange.

A brewing controversy over the Goldsboro Municipal Planning Organization erupted prior to the start of the meetings. The meetings were canceled out of concern that the issue of zoning would be lost in the confusion. Conditions are ripe for the same problems to develop again, **Smith** said. "I am concerned there are a lot of issues out there," **Smith** said. He cited the lingering MPO uproar, possible changes in the subdivision and mobile home ordinances and zoning. "There are a lot of irons in the fire," he said. "I said (to Price) let's be clear (about the issues). I am telling you not to do this now. Let's get these other issues out of the way and settled. "I have no authority over the Planning Board, but I do over the planning staff."

There has been a lot of "mixing" of the issues, he said. As such, he added, it is important to get good information to people and not waste their time. "They need to be educated on the subject matter," he said. "It is as simple as that. Also, the commissioners need to at least know what is going on. They are going to get calls and they are going to be in the dark. I am telling you right now we need to keep the issues separated."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The News Argus
August 11, 2009

County manager vows to help schools

Author/Byline: Phyllis Moore

Stepping out of his role of county manager Monday night, **Lee Smith** made a commitment to Wayne County Board of Education to enlist an army of volunteers for the school system.

A parent himself, **Smith** took on the mantle after serving as a test proctor at his daughter's school in the spring. Witnessing some of the students' frustration in being able to finish the tests struck a chord with him, he said. "It was obvious they were not going to make it," he said. "I left there very upset, very concerned. ... What I saw in talking with some of the staff was the frustration of the teachers, though they have these kids seven, eight hours a day, nine months a year."

While parents have the most important job in the world raising a child, teachers are in second position, **Smith** said. "They influence our children, but they have got a disadvantage also. They become parents for eight hours a day," he said.

There's a question bandied about the county commission when challenges present themselves, the county manager said -- "What am I going to do about it?" **Smith** said he took the question to heart and decided to take action. "What I'm about to tell you is nothing new," he told the board. "It's no great idea. It happens every day." Mentors and tutoring are needed in the school system, experts say -- to provide individual attention that the teachers often can't give. **Smith** proposed the "local government volunteer partnership," starting with the county staff, volunteering and being trained for the job. "Every one of my county commissioners have made a commitment" to do that already, **Smith** said. Since, a total of 30 volunteers have stepped forward. "My goal is 100," **Smith** said. "I want to exceed that goal. We have all volunteered to give our time."

If it takes a village to raise a child, then who better to set the example than its leaders? "We have to take care of our children by giving them an opportunity," **Smith** said, citing something he recently heard schools superintendent Dr. Steven Taylor say at a seminar -- "Children must have at least one person who believes in them." A few volunteers will make a dent, but many can make all the difference. **Smith** said he has made a commitment to "go after 100 folks," but added he is confident the number could exceed that. In addition to the commission and county staff, he expanded his challenge to include the City of Goldsboro and outlying areas -- Mount Olive, Fremont, Pikeville -- "because everybody has a talent, to go into our schools." It's time for the community to step up, **Smith** continued, because the school board cannot do it alone. "It's put up or shut up time for this community. I mean it," he said. "We're committing our staff to take time, mentoring takes a lot of time, training. You're talking making a commitment to a child long-term." **Smith** said he envisions providing training for the volunteers, and at the outset mentors will be assigned to the middle schools.

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William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

School board members were appreciative of the suggestion. Board member Shirley Sims praised **Smith's** decision. "Today you have taken the charge and the challenge. If we could get others who have made such negative comments (about the schools) ... because you're either part of the solution or you're part of the problem," she said.

Board member Thelma Smith also thanked **Smith** for his stance. "What you did is what we have been trying to ask all along," she said. "We know we work hard -- our teachers, our staff, our superintendent. The next piece has been just what you told us." Many in the community have not set foot in the schools, so can't claim to understand the problems, she said. It would be nice if they could "see for yourself" like **Smith** did, she said. "By you speaking tonight, I'm sure there's going to be other groups in the area who are going to follow suit."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News Argus
July 9, 2009

Manager to county: Freeze my salary, too

Author/Byline: Steve Herring

When County Manager **Lee Smith** compiled the 2009-10 budget that was approved last month he did not include any salary increases for county employees or for himself, even though his contract with the county provides for an annual increase of 5 percent.

Smith's salary is \$160,416 and he receives \$12,000 annually for travel. According to data compiled by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, **Smith** is among 14 managers statewide who are paid a base salary of between \$150,000 to \$175,000. **Smith** oversees a \$157.6 million budget and more than 800 full-time employees and a total workforce of close to 1,000 when part-time help is included.

In a letter dated May 1, **Smith** wrote to commission Chairman Bud Gray that, "Due to economic and budget conditions, I am hereby requesting the clause within the employment agreement between me and the County of Wayne determining an annual increase for my position be halted for fiscal year 2009/2010. Due to the fact the county will be unable to give raises to county employees; I feel strongly that I should fall under the same guidelines/restrictions. I appreciate your support and look forward to a time when Wayne County can continue to grow."

Smith said he only decided to publicly comment on the letter after rumors surfaced that he had received a raise. "Otherwise I would have said nothing because I did not think it was deemed worthy," he said. "I just wanted it to be quiet. I did not want to come across like I was trying to be a martyr. "I asked a couple of board members about it and they said that is 'your call, we have a legal binding contract with you,' a five-year agreement."

Another rumor, he said, was that the agreement provided for a five-year severance package. "It is a one-year severance deal," he said. "If I am fired for something criminal, or for negligence, I don't get paid anything. I am not a county employee. I work by statute at the pleasure of the board of county commissioners. I can be fired for parting my hair wrong. "The board gave me a contract, they came in here and renewed my contract at their behest. They said, 'It makes us feel better and we want you to feel good about the job and not feel politically pressured every single day.' That gives you at least a feeling that your board is supportive."

County employees have policy and law behind them, **Smith** said. "The rights given to a county employee, I do not enjoy," he said. "They are by statute at the pleasure of the board. But they (employees) have forewarning and all of these other policies that we create. I don't. So the board was kind enough to do that and put it (a contract) together." The contract spells out the travel allowance and insurance. **Smith** receives all benefits provided full-time employees. The county provides at no cost medical and dental insurance for **Smith** and his family and at least a 5 percent annual contribution to **Smith's** 401K plan. **Smith** said he had received a call from the county's

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William Lee Smith
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human resources department that someone wanted a copy of the contract. "I told them to tell the person to call up (to his office) and that (a copy) is 10 cents a page," he said. "It is pretty easy. It is not a secret. There is nothing to hide. The rumor is that it has been asked for and that we have refused to provide a copy.

"I have asked the clerk to the board of commissioners and my assistant if there has ever been a request in my eight years for my agreement. No. It has never been asked for." **Smith** provided a copy of the two-page contract dated Jan. 1, 2008. In the contract **Smith** waives his rights of confidentiality concerning the agreement and notes that "to that end authorizes the disclosure of this agreement and its entry upon the board's minutes."

The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners recently released data it collected from the state's 100 counties concerning salaries. According to the data Wayne County has a population of 114,000 and approximate valuation (2007-08) in millions of \$5,603.

The commission chairman receives \$11,838 annually and board members \$9,613. Commissioner Jack Best does not accept any of the pay or benefits, **Smith** said. "If there are other things that we attend or go to, if there is a cost associated with it, he reimburses us," **Smith** said. "He tries to pay in advance if he can, but sometimes that is hard to do. "He is in a position to do that and does not fault others who don't. He looks at it as he is serving the public and he wants to do that and that is pretty admirable. Not everybody can do that. He has done it since the day he got on."

Information was unavailable for eight counties in the data compiled by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. Another, Onslow, had a vacant manager's office when the information was gathered.

Managers' salaries range from a low of \$30,384 in coastal Tyrell County to \$215,656, plus another \$12,149 in travel in Mecklenburg County. Wake County is a close second at \$214,127 plus \$6,000 in travel.

Commissioners' salaries range from lows of \$450 per meeting for the chairman and \$150 for members in Tyrell County to a high of \$27,962 plus \$3,528 in travel for the chairman and \$22,370 plus \$3,528 in travel for members in Mecklenburg County.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News Argus
December 28, 2008

County manager looks ahead to 2009

Author/Byline: Steve Herring

There is not a lot to be optimistic about in a downward-spiraling economy that is still trying to find the bottom of the barrel. But Wayne County Manager **Lee Smith** is hopeful that steps taken over the past several years will help insulate the county from the worst of the freefall and allow it to keep projects, such as the \$23 million school facilities plan, on target. **Smith** also views the county budget's health as validation of commissioners' efforts to increase the county's fund balance in the face of criticism. He balances his optimism that the county will not only weather the financial crisis, and may even be able to garner some benefit, with deep concerns over what could be slash-and-burn tactics in Raleigh as legislators raid funds to cover a \$3 billion budget shortfall. Even with those concerns, **Smith** said commissioners have indicated there will be no property tax increase next year. "When I look at next year's budget I see no increase," he said. "I think we have to stay where we are or less. We made the cuts before 2008 in preparation for not only trying to get ready to borrow money for the jail and schools and those kind of things -- we were preparing ourselves for the future as far as having money."

"I still feel strongly about not using the capital and fund balance for one-time items. It is still for emergencies. I am still very hesitant to go back into the fund balance to pay for operations. Now for this coming year I know commissioners, in their mind are going 'no tax increase.' People are under hard times right now. "So what we did for this year we went revenue neutral and in some cases we went below state forecasts and said 'we don't believe it' (state projections). I did not plan on one extra dime this year in property tax and there is a reason because we didn't think it was going to be there." Some areas, say along the beaches, planned on higher values that have dropped dramatically and now they won't be able to make budget, he said.

The state had promised some \$2.5 million to \$3 million for Medicaid. "No way we were going to get that this year from the state," **Smith** said. "So I counted on a million and if I get \$2 million then great, you are \$1 million ahead of the game, but don't count on it." He added, "Sales tax is down, but you have got to remember we live 90 days in arrears in sales tax so you don't have a real picture yet. I will be real curious to begin seeing in February and March what December looked like. That will be the real test. "We know we will see a downturn. How much, I'm not sure, but we did not count on what the state had said. It could it get worse and if it does I will have to make adjustments on the county budget. We already have frozen jobs, already frozen capital projects. I think we have done the things we can do right now to kind of prepare for this downward shift in revenue." Complicating the economic picture somewhat is the county upcoming property revaluation. **Smith** said some people are concerned about conducting revaluation during an economic downturn. "It could have a negative impact," he said. "But say you get beyond 2011, the board may want to go to four-year (revaluation) cycle if you have an upturn in values because you don't want to live with lower values. You want to value closer to what the market value actually is." **Smith** said the state has depended on capital gains tax

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William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

revenues for years to balance budget. "They are not going to be there this year," he said. "It is going to be a problem." **Smith** said it is difficult to know what direction the new state leadership will take. "You have got to be prepared for what they pass down to you," he said. "Usually what they pass down to you is usually less in reimbursements, less in funds of any sort, but they will pass on program responsibilities that in the past have been their responsibility. For example, this past year the state required counties to shoulder more of the cost for foster children care. For Wayne County that meant another \$450,000. **Smith** is concerned about what the lawmakers will do and what funds they may take, including lottery proceeds meant for education. That, he said, could affect the county's school facilities plan. "They have got big holes to fill and where are they going to fill it -- they're going to start to look at pots of money," **Smith** said.

The county schools currently have \$6.2 million in lottery proceeds, but the money technically belongs to the state. "I say get it in the schools' checking account," **Smith** said. "Obligate it. I say build Eastern Wayne or Norwayne or a combination with cash tomorrow. Obligate it or we are going to lose it." "Bid it out and let's do that now," he said. "I am urging them (school board) to move quickly because I think they are going to lose it (lottery money). "I think if we borrow \$16 million and hope to use that (lottery) later I think it is going away. Ask counties about the inventory and intangibles (taxes) in the 1980s. The state said 'We'll never take your money.' Now it is gone." Even a supposed break in Medicaid has cost the county. "The state said 'we are going to give you full relief' and then when it passed they took some of my sales tax. We lost hundreds of thousands of dollars over that. Even though we gained, we still lost a revenue source. I think they are going to take it (lottery) because they don't have a choice. They are not going to raise taxes. "The next phase for the school plan is bond money and bond money is not there. It could be several years before the project could be done."

Smith said people have said to him that adding to the fund balance is just a way to get ready for capital projects. "That's true, but we also did it to build and our sustain our credit rating," **Smith** said. "You also want to do it in case of an economic downturn. Well, we are in one. "The thing Wayne County has been able to do over the past few years is to put some money aside."

Meanwhile, numbers from the Health Department and Department of Social Services worry **Smith**. Applications for the Women Infants Children (WIC) program are up by about 25 percent. Food Stamp applications are up as well. "I think our general health visits are up," **Smith** said. "It's not just those that who are poverty stricken who are walking into DSS and Health Department. These are people who just months before were making \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$60,000 and now don't have a job. They are coming to Wayne County going 'I need some help. I don't have health insurance, what do I do?' "We see them because that is our job. County employees are concerned because when there is an economic downturn their production goes up. That is the thing that is so concerning because that is when there is a strain on taxes yet there is more demand on services. I think we have to be real concerned about that." Housing sales are down, foreclosures are up as are job losses, he said. "There is a lot of fear out there," **Smith** said. "We have people here who build things for the automotive industry so we all are kind of standing back holding our breaths about that. When you watch the Congress hearings about GM and Chryslers that affects Wayne County."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

The News Argus
October 26, 2008

County surviving economic downturn

Author/Byline: Steve Herring

County Manager **Lee Smith** said Wednesday he has "put the skids" on some county spending. **Smith** said while he remains confident that the county's sound fiscal responsibility over the past several years and its ability to grow its savings have put it in a position to weather the ongoing financial crisis, he is still concerned about news he is hearing from the state. The economic downturn isn't expected to derail the county's plans to put a new \$9.7 million communications system in place, but it is too early to tell if it will impact a planned \$22 million school renovation and building project, he said.

The "skids" include a freeze on hiring of non-essential personnel as well as a delay in some capital purchases until the end of the year to see where the county stands, **Smith** said. There are not that many capital purchases in the budget, items that include computers and vehicles, he said. For instance, the county is looking at shifting vehicles around instead of buying new ones, he said. "In some cases we have to buy new because we have some that are older that are costing us a lot of money," **Smith** said. "It (vehicle purchases) is being looked at on a case-by-case basis and we are doing a cost analysis -- how much does it cost to operate it and maintain it. If we are at a point at which we are losing money we will look at a new vehicle, one that might get better gas mileage and reduce maintenance cost."

The four-day work week the county implemented in August is also a "piece" of the county's savings efforts. "Now we are telling workers 'when you leave your office for a period of time, cut your lights off,'" he said. **Smith** said that might not seem like a lot, but if he saves \$25 a year by turning off the lights in his office and that savings is multiplied by all of the other offices then it "adds up."

Another area of savings has been in a reduction of the number of county employees. Over the past several years, the county has left 123 positions vacant, resulting in a savings of \$2.5 million to \$3 million, **Smith** said. But now employee turnover in the county is at an all-time low, he said. "People are staying put," **Smith** said. "I hope that county employees are fairly satisfied with their job and benefits. We used to have wiggle room in open positions, now it is just not there." **Smith** said he is concerned about what he is hearing about cuts on the state level. Early indications were a \$250 million budget shortfall. **Smith** said he would not be surprised to see a \$1 billion shortfall based on what he has seen.

Gov. Mike Easley has made cuts so that might help some, **Smith** said, and some areas look better than they did a couple of weeks ago. "I think the state will have to look to cut and one of the places I fear is going to be Medicaid," he said. "I have never taken what they (state) said they were going to give me at 100 percent," **Smith** said. "In some cases I cut it in half and say there is no way we are going to get that much. I just never felt that confident about it. I think that will

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
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help us if the state decides to start drawing that (Medicaid) back next year. "Also, we planned for this year and next year that our revenues would be flat. No increases. Therefore, if you have extra money you bank it away. You don't spend what you think you might have. You spend what you know you have and save what you have. I think that has helped us this year and that is why I am not as panicked as some. The way a lot of folks fix budgets is that they overestimate revenues and adjust budget at year's end in an audit. We don't do it that way."

"Right now I think we are holding our own and are waiting to see the next sales tax figures," **Smith** said. "We have not seen a major hit yet, but they say we are going to get it. But I think by our projecting flat (revenues) I am hoping that we are kind of prepared for it. "But that does not mean the county can sit back and say it is prepared for it. We have to look for ways to cut back."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Princeton News-Leader (NC)
February 6, 2008

Smith sees more positive tone in county

Author/Byline: Barry Merrill

Wayne County Manager **Lee Smith** had just met with the Carl Best Leadership Group. That hadn't always been one of his favorite meetings. In fact, as he tells it, "I made them mad in 2007." One of the members of that farming community group, Gerald Ballance of Fremont, met with him after that meeting. "You came across very cold," Mr. Ballance reportedly told the county manager.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Ballance and the group to stand up and make their voice heard. "You have a say so in the community. You've got to tell us what you want in your community." **Mr. Smith** was very excited about what he heard this year as he challenged each one to raise one or two issues. He said 70% of the questions were about schools, reflecting their concerns and the increasing importance of education in farming. He said zoning was one of those subjects that riled many in years past, but today there is growing appreciation of the protection zoning offers farmers and others in the county. He said transportation, both rails and roads, are of concern to many in the county.

Agri-business is not the only ones concerned about schools. The business community has been stepping up, not only seeking improvement but offering how they can help. Business people are having a tough time finding and keeping qualified employees. Recently the county helped fund the Work Keys program, which certifies to employers that applicants have certain work skills necessary to do a job. He said this not only offers certification, but also orients students for skills necessary to be productive employees. School Board Chairman Thelma Smith is concerned about students who choose to drop out of school not finding a positive path in society.

Mr. Smith spoke about a program where Teresa Bayer is working the Judge Braswell and the Wayne County Development Alliance to provide GEDs for substance abusers who are completing rehabilitation and want to work. "We want to get them before they end up in jail and learn things that will make it even harder to turn their lives around." He hopes more mentoring programs can be developed to help meet the needs in the county.

Mr. Smith said that while some of his meetings with citizens have not always been positive, some of his meetings with county employees have not always been positive either. "We've made changes in staff, we've had staff turnover, and we've retrained. Some days people don't like me very much." He says they have been trying to clean their own house, not necessarily trying to find fault, but to find where they need to invest. They're setting measurable objectives in every department, and that's not always easy.

He pointed with some pride to the community's recognition of the need for a new animal shelter, and with the community raising \$600,000, including a \$100,000 anonymous pledge. He

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

mentioned that the fundraising success was earning him a haircut, as he was getting his head buzz-cut in response to a challenge he had issued. He also pointed to Commissioner John Bell taking his time to plant flowers at Goldsboro High School, trying to beautify that school campus as a volunteer. He wanted to make the school look better so people will take more pride in the school.

Mr. **Smith** is concerned about health services. He says while most of us see public health services as just for the poor, there are many in the county who can't afford health insurance, including many working people. Some can't afford the insurance or the deductible. He says the WATCH van services and clinics are vitally important for the county to provide those services. One of the benefits of improved health services is reduction in employee absenteeism, and healthier students do better in school.

Much of the conversation revolved around the recently proposed \$23 million school facility plan, and Mr. **Smith** acknowledged that was just the start of the needs. Finding money to do more school construction, along with a new detention center, buildings for health and DSS, and services for the aging is going to be challenging. "Wayne County can't borrow \$300 million." One of the benefits he sees to help finance will be lowered operating costs in new school buildings.

Eventually the county will need to pass a bond issue, but they need the vote of the people to spend the money. "Their vote will be the authorization to spend the money." Mr. **Smith** says in the six years he has been in Wayne County he's seen changes in the way the community is thinking about things in the county. "It's not the same chatter you used to hear. We're talking about 'what do you want to see better?'"

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Wayne-Wilson News Leader (Fremont, NC)
September 27, 2007

Wayne Commissioners plan for growth

Author/Byline: Sarah A. Wise

27 September 2007 - School facilities in the northern end of the county were the hot button issue at the Wayne County Commissioner's Community Meeting at Charles B. Aycock Monday night.

After giving a brief presentation on services the county offers to all of its citizens, County Manager **Lee Smith** addressed questions that citizens had written and submitted before the meeting began. And while the topic ran the gamut from ditches to recreational services, the biggest issue on most people's mind was how soon schools will be expanded in northern Wayne County. Darron Flowers of Fremont asked why the county was just now looking at school facilities when growth and overcrowding issues have been apparent for years.

Mr. **Smith** explained that the county has had several big projects that also need their attention and money, and that they cannot just favor one project over the other. "As a taxpayer myself, I want to know what the payment on the building is, as well as the operational cost," he said. "I want to know how building is going to affect the tax rate."

Another problem, he said, was getting information on not just what it will cost to build additional structures at a particular school, but also the cost of maintaining that structure. "We are just now getting estimates on operational costs for the proposed school projects in the county," he said. "We have gotten that, and sent it back to the school board for revisions, and we're meeting with our financial advisors about it."

He also said that the county is composing a prioritized list of all county projects is in the works now, including either an expanded or a new jail facility, as well as consolidated library facilities in the northern and southern ends of the county. "We don't want to promise you that a high school is going to get built a certain year, and then when that year gets there, we can't go any longer without a new jail," he said. "The local government commission won't let you build that much at one time, you have to spread it out. So we're trying to get a handle on everything we're trying to do."

Later in the meeting, Mr. **Smith** addressed a similar question on addressing classroom space in the county, and dealing with overcrowded schools in some areas while having open space in others. He said that, while he knows it is controversial, the schools have been asked to look at things like reassignment and year-round school. They are also examining the possibility of setting county-wide rules limiting the amount of mobile units schools can have before they must build more classrooms at the school. "We have asked the school board to look at all the ways that we can utilize the schools better," he said, "and you can't do that without looking at some difficult options." He said that in addition to adding classroom space, the board also has to look at what he calls the core of the school - facilities like cafeterias, media centers, and athletic facilities. He said that the capacity to increase the core must be there before more classroom

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

space is added. Mr. Flowers asked where exactly the county was in building schools. "Not to be disrespectful, but can you tell us when you are going to be able to build at each of the schools?" he said. While he stopped short of putting exact years on construction, Mr. **Smith** did say that in the prioritized list from the school, building an additional building at Norwayne is second or third on the list, while building more space at CBA is sixth. He added that plans for a two-story educational classroom were in the works for Norwayne.

Vance Greeson of Pikeville then asked if American Disabilities Act (ADA) would be met in the two story structure, including putting an elevator in. Mr. **Smith** said the building would have to meet those standards to be approved.

School board member Dave Thomas, who also attended the meeting, added a little perspective to the situation in Northern Wayne County. "The high school has 1220 students right now," he said. "They have 305 students per lunch period in the original cafeteria built in 1961. There are 13 mobile units, and ten teachers without classrooms." He also said that Aycock is the only high school in the county that only has one feeder school, and that he felt the need for a second middle school was on the horizon. Pikeville Mayor Herb Sieger asked why the county was committing money to libraries he didn't think were pressing, because there are already facilities in both Pikeville and Fremont, when schools so clearly need to be built.

Mr. **Smith** said that the county is working on a five-year plan and a 10-year plan for all county projects, and that it would be unfair to dismiss any needed projects. He also referred Mr. Sieger to library director Jane Rustin for more information on the libraries.

The school discussion ended with an emphasis on a proposed quarter-percent sales tax in the county that could be used to generate revenue for schools. "We've heard from a lot of people that they would rather see the sales tax than a proposed land transfer tax," he said, "and we think that would generate more revenue." He encouraged citizens to contact the commissioners with their thoughts on the tax, and thanked them for all their input during the meeting.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Wayne-Wilson News Leader (Fremont, NC)
May 25, 2006

Medicaid costs put county in a bind. Wayne seeking Medicaid spending cap

Author/Byline: Reggie Ponder

The Wayne County Board of Commissioners wants the public to understand the bind that the county is in because of Medicaid costs. The commissioners held a work session on Medicaid costs at their meeting Tuesday. The focus of the work session was informing the public about the Medicaid situation. County Manager **Lee Smith** told the commissioners that county officials needed to watch the legislative short session "like a hawk." The legislators have a tough job because they have to find funding, he said. "The spiraling costs of Medicaid are crippling counties' ability to fund education such as school construction, teachers and classroom needs," according to a printed report that Mr. **Smith** presented to the commissioners. "Wayne County spends more for Medicaid than for school facilities." He said that Medicaid was a good program, but that the state-mandated payments were getting out of control. "There's a balance that we've got to find," **Mr. Smith** said. "And as commissioners, you've got a tough job ahead of you." Medicaid will cost county taxpayers more than \$7.5 million next year. That's a 77 percent increase since 2000.

The report indicated that 21.9 percent of the county's residents were Medicaid eligible, that 13 cents of the county's tax rate pays the county's mandated share of Medicaid, and that 9.1 percent of the county's current budget is required for Medicaid. The N.C. Association of County Commissioners' goal is the passage of legislation to implement a six-year phaseout of county participation in the costs of Medicaid. The association also wants the General Assembly to cap county costs at the fiscal year 2004-2005 level and provide relief by targeting supplemental financial assistance to any county in which more than a specified percent of the population is eligible for Medicaid. According to the association of county commissioners, the state has five counties that spend more on Medicaid than for their public schools current expense. Half the state's counties spend more on Medicaid than for public school construction and other capital expenses. Commissioner Wilbur "Andy" Anderson said that Monday's work session was mostly to get the word out to the public. "This is a big issue," Mr. **Smith** said. Projected Medicaid cost in the county is \$18 million by 2018, Mr. Anderson said. Officials need to work together as a team to resolve the issue, he said. "I don't know what the answer is," Mr. Sager said. But requiring Medicaid recipients to pay part of the bill, or changing eligibility requirements, might help. Illegal immigrants also are placing a burden on the Medicaid system, he said.

Mr. Sager said that he didn't want to deny care to anyone. He said that he just wanted to find a better way to handle it. He said that he was concerned about those on Medicaid, but that he also was concerned about those whose incomes are barely above the Medicaid eligibility levels and who can't get care. Mr. **Smith** said that county officials needed to remain engaged with state legislators as the General Assembly works on the Medicaid issue. Mr. Anderson said that he agreed with Mr. Sager's concern about those just above the Medicaid eligibility levels. Mr. **Smith** said that he and the commissioners received emails and telephone calls from families

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

in the \$23,000-\$35,000 income range who say, "I'm dying." They are caught in a squeeze because they don't receive Medicaid and related services and are supporting those that do. In other matters, the board proclaimed May as "Mental Health Month." County Manager **Lee Smith** said that if anyone had a complaint or issue with mental health services, to call 731-1133 and ask for "customer service" - "that is a brand new thing now across the state" - to report to Eastpointe Mental Health Services. "If something is going well we'd like to know that, too," he said. The board also proclaimed May as "Volunteer Month." The board unanimously awarded the banking services contract to BB&T on the staff's recommendation. Mr. **Smith** said that the finance office staff had done an excellent job reviewing the bids. Goldsboro attorney Phil Baddour was appointed to the U.S. Highway 70 Corridor Commission. Mr. **Smith** was appointed to the Wayne County Development Alliance, Inc. Board of Directors. Mr. Anderson said that the county was beginning to see results of improvements to infrastructure. The county commissioners need to continue working with county citizens and keep them involved, he said. "The sky's the limit in Wayne County," Mr. Anderson said. "I think we've got a very, very good future ahead of us." The Wayne County Board of Commissioners plans a bold effort to lobby the state legislature to cap county Medicaid spending and overturn a stringent environmental regulation.

During the commissioners' briefing Tuesday, held just before the regular board meeting, County Manager **Lee Smith** said that a "myriad of bills" had been proposed for addressing the county portion of Medicaid funding. "It will be a daily monitoring," he said of the county's role in watching the General Assembly. Capping county funding of Medicaid would help with local budget issues, he said. Commissioner Munroe "Jack" Best blasted a recent increase in nitrogen runoff fees for developers. The fees, imposed administratively through a state regulatory agency, have increased from \$11 per pound to \$57 per pound of nitrogen. Mr. Best said that for one potential project, the cost increased from \$109,000 to \$634,000. He said that the nitrogen runoff regulations could stifle development in Wayne County. "If you're in the development business, this is a deal-breaker," Mr. Best said. "This is a deterrent to anybody to come to Wayne County because they can't afford it." The issue is job creation, Mr. Best said. The projects that the county has been working on could mean a thousand new jobs for the county, he said. "You've got a board up there that's made up of environmentalists and tree-huggers," said Borden Parker, county attorney.

The fees only affect counties in the Neuse River Basin. Mr. Best and Mr. **Smith** said that the Neuse Basin counties needed to present a unified front on the issue at the General Assembly next week. Many Neuse Basin boards of commissioners and economic development groups don't understand the issue yet, Mr. **Smith** said. "Everybody's just not jumping up and down on this, and this is a killer," Mr. **Smith** said. He said that the General Assembly needed to overturn the administrative rule. The board resumed discussion of the issue later on during the regular board meeting. "This is an absolute death notice for us," Mr. **Smith** said during the meeting. He said that protecting waterways was important, but that there needed to be some balance. "That has got to be fixed," he said. Mr. **Smith** said that monitoring the legislature would be a constant task during the session. "We've got to be vigilant until the very last second," he said.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

News Argus
April 24, 2005

County must make budget decisions

Author/Byline: Barbara Arntsen

For the past three years, County Manager **Lee Smith** has squeezed every penny the county spends and cut 7 percent of the county's labor force to keep from using money from savings. **Smith** and the county commissioners have managed to keep the general fund at a little over \$18 million, while still providing necessary services to the public. But keeping the general fund at a level amount won't allow the county to accomplish long-term projects like building new schools, repairing and expanding water and sewer systems and providing quality health care services.

To adequately prepare for the future, the county has to add to its savings. That means the commissioners will have some tough decisions to make during budget talks this year. Can they add to the county's coffers to prepare for the future without cutting services or increasing taxes? When **Smith** began his job as county manager in 2002, he found that the county had reduced its general fund balance by almost \$12 million over the previous three years. And, **Smith** said, the 2002 expenditures were already over the budget projections.

Working with the finance office, **Smith** cut county expenditures by \$6.2 million between February and June 2002, thereby substantially reducing the amount of money the county would have to take from its savings. Through the budget reductions, he said, the county only had to take about \$3 million from the general fund that year, instead of the projected \$9 million. "My goal then was to look at why there was such a drain on the fund balance and figure out how to stop it," he said. **Smith** said that fund balances in all counties grew in the late 1990's because state reimbursements for various programs, like Medicaid and Medicare, were always coming in well over budget estimates. Those hefty reimbursements stopped by 2000, and counties were then faced with offering more health services with less money.

Smith looked at the county's audit figures over a 10-year period and found that expenditures were growing an average of around \$6 million per year. Revenue growth was not keeping up with expenditures, he said. That trend, **Smith** said, had to be reversed or the county would end up in financial trouble. "If you use your savings to buy groceries, or to pay the light bill, eventually you're going bankrupt," he said. Revaluation of county property added almost \$3 million to the county's revenues, he said, which helped offset the original \$9.5 million over budget expenses. So, when planning for the next year's budget, he budgeted to use \$4.2 million from fund balance, knowing the county would have to bring in revenues equal to that amount or risk draining its savings even more. "By the next year we had brought in revenues to cover that amount, plus we added \$25,000," he said. **Smith** said that adding \$25,000 wasn't much in terms of "growing the fund balance" but said his goal had been to break even for that first year.

For the last two years, the county has kept its fund balance even at \$18.2 million by reducing general fund expenditures by 13 percent, cutting labor by 7 percent and increasing tax collection

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

rates by almost 2 percent. A budget that once ballooned at \$96 million is now at \$83.5 million. By maintaining the fund balance and reducing expenditures, the county was able to maintain its A+ rating when reviewed in 2004 by Standard & Poors. Standard & Poors is an international company that provides independent credit ratings, risk evaluation, investment research, data, and valuations for government and corporations.

That A+ rating will help the county get the lowest interest rates when borrowing money, but the fund balance also has to increase to accomplish the projects facing the county. "The more debt that you have, the more savings you must have," **Smith** explained. "Three years ago we were \$9.5 million off budget, which is 18 cents on the tax rate," **Smith** said. "Now, at year's end, we're very close to projected expenses."

Wayne County meets the state requirements for the money in its general fund, but is on the low end of what the state recommends. "We're required to have at least \$13 million in there by the Local Government Commission," said **Smith**. "But they would like us to have between \$18 to \$22 million."

What the recommended budget will be for the county for 2005-2006 is still not known, because **Smith** and his staff are still meeting with department heads to hammer out the needs. And the county isn't expecting to receive the school's final budgetary needs until mid-May.

Some of the schools fiscal needs should become apparent next week when the commissioners and the school board meet for a day-long budget retreat.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
William Lee Smith
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

News Argus
May 19, 2004

County manager gets four-year contract

Author/Byline: Matt Shaw

The Wayne County commissioners agreed Tuesday on a contract for County Manager Lee **Smith**, his first since taking the job two years ago. The four-year deal does not change **Smith's** salary, currently \$92,000, or his benefits, although it does call for **Smith** to receive any cost-of-living increase given other county employees.

The contract's main benefit for **Smith** is that it protects him against an arbitrary decision by the commissioners to fire him. **Smith** would be due six months of severance pay and compensation for lost benefits if he's dismissed without good cause. **Smith** called the contract a vote of confidence.

Traditionally, managers have worked at the pleasure of the board, **Smith** said today. They could be fired "for any reason or even for no reason." In the last decade or so, more managers have sought contracts as a way to protect themselves and their families. About half the county managers in the state have contracts, **Smith** estimated.

Smith is the first Wayne County manager to have a contract. He also had one in Washington County, where he worked until taking the job here in late 2001.

Commissioners said they wanted to give **Smith** stability, especially with the chance that some commissioners will not be re-elected this fall. At least one new face is guaranteed in District 5, while three other incumbents face challengers.

Commissioner John Bell said that he'd like to give **Smith** a 10-year deal and then later joked, "We could do like they do in some Third World countries and make him manager for life." "Whether he wants to or not," **Smith** responded with a laugh.

The new deal, which runs through May 2008, says that **Smith's** salary will be set as part of the budget process. He will receive at least any cost of living pay increase given employees, but commissioners could decide to raise his pay more.

The manager also receives all county benefits, \$8,400 for travel, medical and dental insurance for both him and his family, and a 3 percent contribution to his 401(k) retirement plan.

Compiled By: Shannon Farr and Chris Nestman
Colin Baenziger and Associates

CITY COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM
City of Fernandina Beach



SUBJECT: City Manager Finalist Interviews
The City Commission will interview City Manager finalists in City Hall chambers.

ITEM TYPE: Discussion

REQUESTED ACTION: Consider City Manager finalists.

SYNOPSIS: *The City Commission will interview City Manager finalists in City Hall chambers:*

Time	Name
1:00 to 1:05 p.m.	Review procedures for interviews
1:05 to 1:35 p.m.	Alves-Viveiros
1:35 to 2:05 p.m.	Davis
2:05 to 2:35 p.m.	Mahaney
2:35 to 2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45 to 3:15 p.m.	Smith
3:15 to 3:45 p.m.	Campbell

FISCAL IMPACT:

CITY ATTORNEY COMMENTS: N/A

CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION(S): At the pleasure of the City Commission.

Denise Matson, Human Resources Director 8/16/2024
Kim Briley, Deputy City Clerk 8/19/2024
Jeremiah Glisson, Interim City Manager 8/19/2024

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caroline Best".

Date: July 30, 2024

Submitted By: Caroline Best, City Clerk

COMMISSION ACTION:

CITY COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM
City of Fernandina Beach



SUBJECT: City Manager Finalist Selection

ITEM TYPE: Discussion

REQUESTED ACTION: Consider City Manager finalists.

SYNOPSIS: The City Commission selects a finalist and directs staff to negotiate an employment agreement for consideration at their September 17, City Commission Regular Meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: Fiscal impact will be based upon City Commission direction.

CITY ATTORNEY COMMENTS: N/A

CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION(S): At the pleasure of the City Commission.

Kim Briley, Deputy City Clerk

Jeremiah Glisson, Interim City Manager

Denise Matson, Human Resources Director

Caroline Best

Date: July 30, 2024

Submitted By: Caroline Best, City Clerk

COMMISSION ACTION: