



NEBA News

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September- October 2009

NEBA Hosts Speakers On Local Tax Issues

by: **Jim Ashlock**

Stephen Stewart, local businessman and publisher of *Tallahassee Reports*, and **Jim Davis**, executive director of Blueprint 2000, spoke at NEBA luncheons in June and July regarding local tax issues.

Stewart zeroed in on the latest city budget where it was determined there was a \$7.5 million shortfall in the general fund budget of \$137 million for fiscal 2009. He noted that the three primary sources of revenue for the city are \$57 million in taxes and franchise fees, \$36 million in transfer of utility revenues from the city's electric operation, and \$16 million from the half-cent sales tax plus the city's share of sales tax collected by the state. An additional \$21 million is collected for charges for services, licenses & permits, fines & forfeiture and what is listed simply "other revenues."

Stewart calculated that if the city elected to cover this \$7.5 million shortfall with tax increases, it would require a 20% increase in current property tax revenue or a 22% boost in the utility transfer. Both these alternatives would result in significant tax increases.

Investigation of the budget Stewart said revealed the city has



From Left to right: Cheryl Stewart, Stephen Stewart and Delonna Hartley

accumulated \$17 million in what is called the "conservation fund," money collected through the years on utility bills as a hedge against increases in the cost of natural gas to power the city's electric utility.

"A one-time transfer of \$7.5 million from this fund would cover the shortfall in the budget without increasing taxes or cutting services."

However, he said the city has consistently refused to apply this money for such purposes. The city implemented employee cuts, service reductions and other measures to cover revenue shortfalls in the budget.

Jim Davis, executive director of Blueprint 2000, outlined the projects of his organization which is funded by a one percent sales tax on retail sales.

Majority of the projects involve widening Capital Circle around the

southwest and southeast segments. The latest section to be completed is from I-10 to U.S. 90. Work is progressing on sections of the southeast part, where the project is divided into:

- *Orange Avenue to U.S. 90
- *Crawfordville Hwy. to State Road 20
- *Woodville Hwy. to Crawfordville Hwy.
- *Woodville Hwy. to Tram Road
- *Tram Road to Connie Drive

Davis said studies were still underway to determine a final right of way for widening Capital Circle south from Orange Avenue on around past the airport. There's been much debate on how to minimize impact on residential properties in this area.

Beyond roadwork, Davis showed illustrations of plans for the Capital Cascade Trail on the southeast sector of downtown Tallahassee. Elaborate plans are in the works for this, including a massive pond fed by "SPEAKER" from front page

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NEBA News

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Send articles, letters, photos or suggestions to: NEBA News at the following email addresses: burns@leoncountyfl.gov or maureen@mediaoptionsinc.com. or FAX-850-893-4097.

For additional information phone Maureen Thompson at 850-668-0948 or Nancy Burns at 850-922-3331

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storm water runoff; a band shell; a long fence featuring signs that trace the city's history; a monument near the Meridian Marker; a memorial to the site of the old ballpark, Centennial Field, and a memorial to an early African-American neighborhood in this area.



From left to Right: Michele Lynch, Jim Davis and Herb Chandler

In The Beginning...

by: Peggy Munroe

Way back in October 1991, Capital Circle NE was a mess! Driveways were torn up; access to businesses was difficult, if not impossible. Everyone on the circle was frustrated. Jim Norman of Scales & Tails was the first person to act, sending someone out to leave fliers with the businesses along the circle, inviting us to unite.

Our first meetings were in an empty building in the Canopy Roads Shopping Center. We put together a mission statement and elected officers. Jim Norman was president, Hugh Davis was vice-president, Enos Kerr was treasurer and I, who didn't know the codes you needed for WORD back in those days, was secretary. (My minutes were written in all caps.) Lynn Wollschlager was the one and only board member.

We soon lost our meeting space and, for a long time, businesses took turns hosting the meetings until we got so large that wasn't practical. We have outgrown several meeting places.

Our primary focus in the beginning was just surviving the road work. We found out who the foremen were and got their cell phone numbers so if anyone had a

problem, we knew who to contact. NEBA members and the foremen got to know each other very well! They were surprisingly cooperative, making driveways passable, even pulling stuck customer cars out of the mud.

We ran full page ads, with a circle containing a map of our businesses in the center, and smaller, individual ads surrounding it. We talked about making this a special shopping destination by getting special street lights installed, but that, of course, never happened. Most of us survived the road work!

In the beginning, this was all about the circle, but after the road work was finished, we realized that no one was looking out for the interests of small business. We began to take a closer look at what our elected officials were doing and soon found out they were not always looking out for us. Thus began our political involvement. As a result, business people from other parts of town joined us and we just keep growing.

We have tackled many issues over the years and our city and county commissioners have become quite familiar with NEBA. We have had influence on some very important issues in our community, not just the North east quadrant. And we are PROUD...!

Happy Birthday NEBA!

September of 1991 was the original start of the North East Business Association (NEBA) and look how far we have come. We are 120 members strong and growing.

We continue to be involved in all aspects of small businesses and of keeping business owners informed. We are not afraid to stand up for important issues and be a concerned voice for businesses in the Leon County/Tallahassee community.

Some of the many issues and accomplishments we have been involved in over the 18 years are:
*Being involved in the blockage of a proposal to raise the sales tax to finance indigent health care.

*Led battle to repeal Impact Fees on local business.

*Discussing the Lake Lafayette stormwater ordinance, and the manner in which tributaries are defined and it's restrictive definition concerning construction.

*Voicing our concerns about the City proposing a ½ mill increase in property taxes, generating \$3.2 million. Resulting in an 18% increase in a proposal passed by the City Commission to improve neighbor-hood streets, sidewalk, curb & gutter construction and stormwater issues.

*NEBA rallied behind the push for consolidated City elections to the fall (thus saving city taxpayers \$275,000).

*Questioned the logic behind the downtown CRA (Community Redevelopment Area), by addressing how it could adversely affect businesses outside of the CRA district. Keep



the monies separate and used for the CRA, but also implemented a clause that stated no rent subsidies would be offered.

* We challenged Campaign and Election Law Amendment regarding campaign reform brought forward by a citizens committee and believed that it would result in a heavily anti-business climate.

*Rallied against a bill the Florida Association of Counties had proposed, by way of the Florida Senate, that would eliminate the requirement that local voters approve a cent sales tax for growth or a half cent sales tax for schools

* Inquired about the City of Tallahassee's proposed Inclusionary Housing Ordinance that would require builders with developments of over 50 units to make 10% of the units "inclusionary housing" (currently valued at \$110,000 - \$158,000).

* We were opposed to any proposal that would give the county commission tax raising authority without voter approval.

* Rallied to support a reduction in property assessment rates which resulted in county commissioners reducing the rate to put \$1.8 million of anticipated tax collections back into the pockets of property owners.

*Opposed the proposed "Hometown

Our NEBA Presidents over the years.
Thanks for your service to this Association!

2009 Ted Thomas
2008 Bill Moore
2007 Rich Blankenship
2006 Nancy Burns
2005 Maureen Thompson
2004 Will Messer
2003 Alan Null
2002 Ted Thomas
2001 Peggy Munroe

1999 Chris Keena-**June 1999 to January 2001**

1998 Andy Roberts
1997 Diane Redinger
1996 Greg Cochran
1995 Everett Yarbrough
1994 Peggy Munroe
1993 Hugh Davis

1991 Jim Norman-**October 1991 to June 1993**

September 1991-
Start of the North East Business Association

Democracy" amendment to the Florida Constitution that would imperil Florida's prosperity and quality of life

*Challenged the Leon County Commission to hold off a proposed 16 percent boost in the county tax rate, a raise that would severely impact businesses, rental properties and other non-homestead holdings..

We will continue to have speakers that address issues that can have great impact on our community's growth, such as, the coal plant, Fallschase, Blueprint 2000, the Economic Development Council, elections issues, Eminent Domain, Consolidation, I-10 expansion, views on the Amendment one property tax constitutional amendment, tax issues and political forums. We appreciate your continued support. See you at the next meeting.

Calendar

NEBA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at Cabell's American Grill
2915 Kerry Forest Parkway
from 1:00 p.m.- 2:00 p.m.
Cost is \$11.00 per person

September 8- David Batt- Executive Dir. of the Consumer Energy Alliance of Florida-Topic- Drilling for oil and gas in this country.

October 13- NEBA's 18th birthday, complete with birthday cake.
Guest- Our first president, Jim Norman and other board members.

November 10- Fla. Banking Association Executive Vice President Anthony DiMarco



Cabell's
**AMERICAN
BAR ★ GRILL**

Mark Your Calendars!

September 8th will be a big change for NEBA members! It will be our first meeting at Cabell's American Grill on Kerry Forest Parkway.

We'll have a bigger, nicer meeting room, new food and plenty of parking.

The cost will be \$11.00.
See you at the next meeting.

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Copiers * Engineering Systems * Printers * Fax
1949 Raymond Diehl Road, Suite B
Tallahassee, Florida 32308
850-385-1772 Phone
850-385-0087 FAX
850-524-3323 Mobile
rich@tlhtech.com



Website Content Updates By:

**CURTECH Computer
Services, LLC**

www.at-home-computer-support.com

850.980.2571

Curt@CURTECHIT.com



North East Business Association
c/o 2791 Capital Circle N.E.
Tallahassee, Fl. 32308