

Commissioner Romney Rogers, District IV



Saturday, April 25th was a busy day beginning with the renaming of Civic Peoples Park in honor of Dr. Elizabeth Hays. I was happy to see many of you who worked side-by-side with Dr. Hays in our District and for the benefit of residents of our city. I know this recognition brought a spot of joy and sense of pride to the Hays Family and the Dr. Elizabeth Hays Peoples Park will continue to provide a space for relaxation and recreation to our community.

Going Green is the order of the day and Green Expo was also well attended on Saturday at Stranahan Park, in front of the library. There were great exhibits and both adults and children were having fun learning about the latest green technology and eco-friendly and sustainable methods of living.

Looking towards the future of Fort Lauderdale, our Economic Development Department is partnering with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce to conduct a Business Retention and Expansion Project (BRE). The partnership allows both entities to assess the needs and concerns of businesses and facilitate retention and growth without the large expense, to the city, of hiring additional staff.

The Budget continues as the main focus for the commission. The 2009 budget is already down 4%-5% below projections for the rest of Florida. However a bright spot on the revenue side is Yacht & Docking fees, which speaks of the importance of the Marine Industry to our city.

Property tax revenues will continue to drop and are expected to reach record lows in 2010. Although the city has received 83% of the property tax revenues to date, decreased valuations are impacting revenues. The only areas still holding value are industrial properties and revenue received from franchise fees. As you know, the State of Florida recognized and began planning for budget shortfalls in the recently passed State budget. Our Property Appraiser Lori Parrish sees a 10%-12% drop in residential property tax revenue and possibly more decline before this budget crisis is resolved. Our Public Safety (police & fire) is 59% of the operating budget and because we all believe public safety is a priority, finding budget savings here will be extremely tough.

The entire commission is working hard to meet the budget challenges. Areas I feel we can affect a change include:

- More public/private partnerships to generate more revenue positive items
- Greater cooperation with the County to eliminate duplicate agencies and programs
- Increase revenues from downtown economic development by enhancing downtown as a business destination.
- 'Zero-based budgeting' to allow for bottom up change

I would appreciate your input on other ideas to save taxpayer dollars. Remember I have a pre-agenda meeting on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month, beginning at 5:30pm in the City Hall cafeteria or conference room on the 8th floor. Your bi-weekly notices with specify the room. Please come with your questions and input. Of course, you can always contact me by phone or e-mail at (954) 828-5028 or Rrogers@fortlauderdale.gov.