

WALTON COUNTY
TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION, INC
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Tax Beacon

● OCTOBER - 2008

focus on

Our 2008 Tax Rates

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THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION, INC
'THE EYES AND EARS FOR WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS'

VOTE 2008

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS IN THE AUGUST 26TH PRIMARY ELECTION! THE DISTRICT 5 COUNTY COMMISSION SEAT AND REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE FOR SHERIFF WERE ESPECIALLY HARD FOUGHT RACES.

CECILIA JONES, A BOARD MEMBER OF WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION FOR 20 YEARS AND FORMER OFFICER, IS THE NEW DISTRICT 5 COUNTY COMMISSIONER. LARRY JONES WON A THIRD TERM AS COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3. SCOTT BRANNON HAD NO OPPONENT AND WILL SERVE A SECOND TERM AS COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 1.

CARLENE ANDERSON WON RE-ELECTION TO A SECOND TERM OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT. WITH NO OPPOSITION, MARTHA INGLE WILL SERVE ANOTHER TERM AS COUNTY COURT CLERK, RHONDA SKIPPER AS TAX COLLECTOR AND PATRICK PILCHER AS PROPERTY APPRAISER.

AUGUST 26, 2008
PRIMARY ELECTION REGISTERED
VOTERS IN WALTON COUNTY
35,186

REGISTERED VOTERS NORTH OF
CHOCTAWHATCHEE BAY
21,155

REGISTERED VOTERS SOUTH OF
CHOCTAWHATCHEE BAY
14,031

TOTAL VOTES CAST COUNTY-WIDE
(AVERAGED - THEY VARIED BY RACE)
9,787

VOTER APATHY REIGNED SUPREME IN THE PRIMARY ELECTION WITH APPROXIMATELY 28% OF REGISTERED VOTERS ACTUALLY VOTING. 21.5% REGISTERED VOTERS SOUTH OF THE BAY VOTED. 32% OF REGISTERED VOTERS NORTH OF THE BAY VOTED.

MIRAMAR BEACH PROPERTY OWNERS HISTORICALLY HAVE PAID SOME

OF THE HIGHEST PROPERTY TAXES IN WALTON COUNTY. THE MIRAMAR BEACH VOTING PRECINCT HAS THE MOST REGISTERED VOTERS, 6,276, OF ANY PRECINCT IN THE COUNTY. IT HAS 2,000 MORE REGISTERED VOTERS THAN THE SECOND LARGEST PRECINCT, NORTH DEFUNIAK, 2,000 MORE THAN THE THIRD LARGEST PRECINCT, SANTA ROSA BEACH, AND DOUBLE THE REGISTERED VOTERS IN FREEPORT PRECINCT.

ON AUGUST 26TH, A MEAGER 17.5% OF MIRAMAR BEACH VOTERS TOOK THE TIME OR MADE THE EFFORT TO VOTE.

SINCE THE PRIMARY ELECTION, AN ADDITIONAL 1,692 PEOPLE HAVE REGISTERED TO VOTE IN WALTON COUNTY.

OCTOBER 20, 2008
TOTAL REGISTERED VOTERS IN
WALTON COUNTY
36,878

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

SINCE 2000, THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION'S FIGHT FOR LOWER TAXES HAS GAINED ATTENTION IN ALL AREAS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE SEEN RESULTS IN SEVERAL OF THE PAST EIGHT YEARS AS THE COUNTY COMMISSION LOWERED THE PROPERTY TAX RATE MULTIPLE TIMES, THE SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO CONTROL ROLLED BACK TAXES FOR TEN YEARS IN A ROW AND THE SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT LOWERED THE TAX RATE LAST YEAR.

TWO YEARS AGO, WE BEGAN WARNING TAXING OFFICIALS THAT LOWERING TAX RATES WERE NOT ENOUGH. WE ASKED THEM TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO REDUCE SPENDING BECAUSE THE WEALTH IN TAX REVENUES WOULD NOT CONTINUE. WE PREDICTED THE FINANCIAL DOWNTURN IN OUR LOCAL ECONOMY WOULD WORSEN, AND IT HAS. THERE WERE SOME WEAK ATTEMPTS AT REDUCED SPENDING BY SOME, BUT NOT ALL, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITIES. HOWEVER, THERE WERE NOT SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN RECURRING EXPENSES THAT WOULD PERMANENTLY DOWN-SIZE BUDGETS.

FROM 2000 THROUGH 2006, WALTON COUNTY GOVERNMENTS GREW FASTER THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE COUNTY'S HISTORY. THE ECONOMY GENERATED UNPRECEDENTED TAX REVENUES WHICH GOVERNMENT EAGERLY SPENT. DEVELOPMENT ON WALTON COUNTY'S "GOLD COAST" SOUTH OF THE CHOCTAWHATCHEE BAY PROVIDED THE WEALTH FOR GOVERNMENT'S SPENDING FRENZY. THAT REVENUE HAS NOW DRIED UP WITH VACANT REAL ESTATE AND MANY AREAS SOUTH OF THE BAY LOOKING LIKE A GHOST TOWN.

PEOPLE ARE LOSING JOBS, HOMES AND INVESTMENTS WHILE COPING WITH SPIRALING PRICES OF FOOD, GASOLINE, UTILITIES AND OTHER SERVICES. EVERYONE IS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO CUT EXPENSES IN THEIR PERSONAL BUDGETS. WE ASK GOVERNMENT TO DO NO LESS. THE CURRENT DISMAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SHRINK TAX REVENUES. GOVERNMENT NEEDS A REALITY CHECK. THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR GREED TO CONTINUE UNABATED. THERE IS AN URGENCY TO REDUCE GOVERNMENT SPENDING, NOW. WE MUST INSIST ON FISCAL SANITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FROM OUR LEADERS. RAISING TAXES DURING A RECESSION IS NOT AN OPTION.



WALTON COUNTY

A CHANGE OF COMMAND

I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING PRESIDENT OF THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION SINCE 2004, AND TO HAVE BEEN A BOARD MEMBER SINCE 1994. WITH SMART AND CAPABLE PEOPLE AT MY SIDE, WE HAVE ACHIEVED MANY SUC-

CESSSES ON BEHALF OF TAXPAYERS COUNTY-WIDE. I KNOW OF NO GROUP THAT HAS WORKED HARDER OR BEEN A BETTER ADVOCATE FOR TAXPAYERS THAN OUR ORGANIZATION. I HAVE DECIDED TO RESIGN AS PRESIDENT AT THE END OF THIS YEAR TO MAKE ROOM FOR FRESH MINDS AND NEW IDEAS.

THE PEOPLE WHO SERVE ON THE TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION BOARD ARE LEADERS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS FROM ALL OVER WALTON COUNTY. THEY GIVE ENDLESS HOURS OF THEIR TIME TO ALL KINDS OF CAUSES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY, APPOINTED BOARDS AND COUNCILS, WITHOUT ONE CENT OF COMPENSATION AND WITHOUT COMPLAINTS. THEY GIVE BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITIES BECAUSE IT IS INHERENT IN THEIR CHARACTERS THAT IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO. I AM SO PROUD TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THESE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE LITERALLY "WATCHED MY BACK" AS THEY ALLOWED ME TO BE THEIR LEADER.

OUR TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION HAS ACCOMPLISHED MORE THAN CAN POSSIBLY BE LISTED HERE. WE ESPECIALLY FOUND OUR FOCUS IN 2001

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



BONNIE MCQUISTON
WCTA PRESIDENT

IT TRULY HAS BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE A TEAM EFFORT. YOU, OUR MEMBERS, ARE A VITAL PART OF THAT TEAM AND I KNOW YOU WILL WELCOME AND SUPPORT OUR NEW LEADERS.

WHEN WE REALIZED THAT AS OUR COUNTY BECAME WEALTHY BEYOND BELIEF SO WERE OUR GOVERNING BODIES. WE BECAME ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN ALL ASPECTS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT FINANCES AND, BELIEVE ME, FOLLOWING THE MONEY TRAIL WAS NOT EASY. IT WAS DURING THIS TIME THAT WE TOOK ON THE SLOGAN "THE EYES AND EARS FOR WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS".

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY POSITIVE CHANGES IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT DURING THE ENSUING YEARS. IN MY OPINION, THERE IS MORE TRANSPARENCY IN WALTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT TODAY THAN IN ANY COUNTY IN FLORIDA. THE PEOPLE WE HAVE ELECTED TO OFFICE AND THEIR STAFFS GO THE EXTRA MILE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION, RESPOND TO OUR REQUESTS AND TO ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS. I AM TRULY PROUD OF THE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION AND OPENNESS WE HAVE FOSTERED THROUGHOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

NO MATTER HOW GOOD WE ARE AS AN ORGANIZATION, THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM TO BE BETTER. AND THAT IS WHAT I EXPECT FROM THE NEW BOARD AND OFFICERS WHO WILL TAKE COMMAND OF THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION IN JANUARY 2009. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING WHAT THE ENERGIES AND TALENTS OF THESE DEDICATED PEOPLE CAN ACHIEVE.

I HOPE TO STAY INVOLVED AT SOME LEVEL IN OUR ORGANIZATION, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH COASTAL COUNTIES THROUGHOUT THE PANHANDLE IN FORMING THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA TAXPAYERS ALLIANCE. I THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING ME AND OUR ORGANIZATION THROUGH THE YEARS.

B onnie McQ uiston

TRIM NOTICES - 2008

TRIM (TRUTH IN MILLAGE) IS THE TAX NOTICE YOU RECEIVE ANNUALLY IF YOU ARE A PROPERTY OWNER. THIS IS YOUR PROPERTY TAX BILL THAT TELLS YOU HOW MUCH YOU ARE GOING TO BE CHARGED FOR SERVICES FROM COUNTY, MUNICIPAL, SCHOOL AND INDEPENDENT SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICTS.

THE TRIM NOTICE LETS THE PROPERTY OWNER COMPARE PRIOR YEAR ASSESSED VALUE AND TAXES WITH THE PRESENT YEAR. IT SHOWS THE DEADLINE FOR FILING A PETITION TO PROTEST THE ASSESSMENT OR THE DENIAL OF EXEMPTION. THE NOTICE LISTS THE DATE, TIME AND LOCATION OF BUDGET HEARINGS. AT BUDGET HEARINGS, TAXING AUTHORITIES ESTABLISH THE TAX RATE (MILLAGE) THAT PROPERTY OWNERS WILL PAY ON THEIR TAX BILLS. THE HEARINGS ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TAXPAYERS TO BE HEARD. HERE ARE THE TAX RATES ESTABLISHED FOR THIS YEAR COMPARED TO 2007.

OFFICIALLY ADOPTED RATES

| AUTHORITY | NEW MILLAGE - 2008 | MILLAGE RATE - 2007 |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| COUNTY | 3.3563 | 3.3563 |
| HOSPITAL DEBT | 0.0081 | 0.0144 |
| COUNTY TOTAL | 3.3644 | 3.3707 |
| LOCAL SCHOOL DIST. | 2.265 | 2.351 |
| STATE REQUIRED | 1.782 | 1.696 |
| DISTRICT TOTAL | 4.047 | 4.047 |
| NWFWATER MANAGEMENT | 0.045 | 0.045 |
| NWF MOSQUITOCONTROL | 0.4912 | 0.5089 |
| SOWALTON MOSQUITO | 0.0998 (TAX INCREASE) | 0.0744 |
| DEFUNIAK SPRINGS | 4.50 (TAX INCREASE) | 4.4252 |
| FREEPORT | 3.93 | 3.93 |
| SOWALTON FIREDISTRICT | 0.76 (TAX INCREASE) | 0.70 |

**2008 TOTAL MILLAGE RATE
(YOU WILL BE CHARGED ACCORDING TO WHERE YOU LIVE)**

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|
| WALTON COUNTY(O5) | 7.9476 | 7.9696 |
| DEFUNIAK SPRINGS(O1) | 11.9564 | 11.8879 |
| FREEMONT(O2) | 11.3864 | 11.3927 |
| SOWALTON MOSQUITO(O6) | 7.5562 | 7.5371 |
| SOWALTON FIRE DISTRICT(O7) | 8.3162 | 8.2371 |

| TAXING AUTHORITY | 2008 TAXABLE VALUE WALTON COUNTY | ONE MIL EQUALS (ROUNDED) |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| COUNTY TAXABLE | \$ 16,501,125,081 | \$ 16,501,125 |
| SCHOOL TAXABLE | \$ 16,729,382,036 | \$ 16,729,382 |
| SOWALTON FIRE DISTRICT | \$ 14,713,765,340 | \$ 14,713,765 |
| SOWALTON MOSQUITO | \$ 14,932,374,856 | \$ 14,932,375 |

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

2009 BUDGET \$ 111,409,645 PLUS RESERVES OF \$ 38,369,121 - TOTAL \$ 149,778,766

2008 BUDGET \$ 128,168,120 PLUS RESERVES OF \$ 32,927,636 - TOTAL \$ 161,095,756

THANK YOU, COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, FOR KEEPING THE SAME TAX RATE (MILLAGE) AS LAST YEAR AND NOT RAISING TAXES. THANK YOU FOR REDUCING THE OPERATIONS PART OF THE BUDGET 13% AND THE TOTAL BUDGET 7%.

THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSION HAS TRIMMED BUDGETS FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS WERE ASKED TO HAVE ZERO INCREASES IN 2009 BUDGETS. ALL COMPLIED EXCEPT SHERIFF JOHNSON, WHO ASKED FOR MORE MONEY AND WAS REFUSED THE INCREASE.

IN CONTRAST, CLERK OF COURT MARTHA INGLE WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND THE ZERO INCREASE BY REDUCING HER BUDGET FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR BY APPROXIMATELY \$26,000.

IN 2008, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTY EMPLOYEES (ALL CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICES) WAS 964.5. BY COMBINING POSITIONS OR NOT FILLING VACANCIES, THE TOTAL EMPLOYEE COUNT FOR 2009 IS DOWNSIZED TO 950.

TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE BONNIE MCQUISTON ASKED COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AT THE FINAL BUDGET HEARING TO REVIEW SPENDING IN SPECIFIC CATEGORIES, WITH AN EYE TOWARD REDUCING RECURRING EXPENSES.

1) ALMOST ALL COUNTY DEPARTMENTS ARE ASSIGNED A COUNTY VEHICLE. THE EXPANSIVE FLEET OF COUNTY AUTOMOBILES (EXCLUDING PUBLIC WORKS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT) SHOULD HAVE A COST ANALYSIS OF NUMBER OF MILES DRIVEN AND MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT VERSUS THE COSTS OF NEW CAR, GASOLINE AND MAINTENANCE. FURTHERMORE, FUTURE ASSIGNMENTS OF COUNTY CARS SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED AND JUSTIFIED. THE ENTIRE COUNTY FLEET OF VEHICLES SHOULD BE REDUCED.

2) EACH COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT OFFICE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DISTRICT 4 – SARA COMANDER – HAS A COUNTY CAR FOR STAFF USE. THIS IS AN EXTRAVAGANCE THAT CAN AND SHOULD BE ELIMINATED. MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT IS A VIABLE OPTION FOR STAFF. EACH COMMISSIONER RECEIVES \$ 1,083 A MONTH AS A SUBSIDY FOR USING THEIR OWN CAR.

3) CELL PHONES SHOULD BE INVENTORIED WITH JUSTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR EACH PHONE. ENFORCE RULES FOR BUSINESS VERSUS PRIVATE USE.

4) THE COUNTY PAYS 100% OF MEDICAL INSURANCE PREMIUMS FOR EMPLOYEES. THE ANNUAL COST TO TAXPAYERS IS APPROXIMATELY \$ 5 MILLION. HIGHER DEDUCTIBLES, EMPLOYEE HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS, AND EMPLOYEES PAYING A PORTION OF PREMIUMS ARE OPTIONS THAT CAN LOWER COSTS. WHEN MEDICAL INSURANCE IS ADDED TO OTHER COUNTY-PROVIDED BENEFITS OF LONG TERM DISABILITY, LIFE INSURANCE AND RETIREMENT, THE COST AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COMPENSATION IS ABOUT 35%.

SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT

2009 BUDGET \$ 18,634.668

2008 BUDGET \$ 17,375,790

FIRE COMMISSIONERS INCREASED THE PROPERTY TAX RATE (MILLAGE) 8.6% FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR THEREBY INCREASING TAXES.

THE SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT IS AN INDEPENDENT SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT THAT PROVIDES SERVICES TO APPROXIMATELY 84 SQUARE MILES. THE DISTRICT IS GOVERNED BY A SEVEN MEMBER BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONDUCTING THE BUSINESS OF THE DISTRICT. THIS INCLUDES SETTING THE AD VALOREM TAX RATE (MILLAGE) THAT AFFECTS PROPERTY TAXES, HIRING AND EVALUATING THE FIRE CHIEF, ASSURING APPROPRIATE BUSINESS OPERATIONS ARE IN PLACE TO RUN THE DISTRICT AND NEGOTIATING UNION CONTRACTS WITH FIREFIGHTERS.

LAST YEAR, THE NEW FIRE CHIEF RICK TALBERT WITH FINANCE MANAGER BRIAN FLANAGAN RECOMMENDED THE FIRE BOARD LOWER THE TAX RATE 12.5%. THE FIRE BOARD APPROVED LOWERING THE TAX RATE FROM .80 MILS TO .70 MILS. THIS WAS THE SECOND TIME SINCE THE FIRE DISTRICT BEGAN CHARGING AD VALOREM TAXES THAT MILLAGE WAS REDUCED. THE TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION RECOGNIZED AND THANKED THE FIRE DISTRICT AND BOARD FOR THEIR ACTIONS IN CONSIDERATION OF TAXPAYERS IN A DECLINING SOUTH WALTON ECONOMY

SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION ATTENDED THE BUDGET HEARINGS THIS YEAR. WE MISSED THE BUDGET WORKSHOP SINCE NO ONE KNEW THE DATE. PUBLIC NOTICE WAS POSTED FOR THE BUDGET WORKSHOP IN THE DESTIN LOG. THE FIRE DISTRICT IS REQUIRED TO GIVE ONLY 2 DAYS NOTICE. WE REQUESTED THE FIRE DISTRICT POST NOTICES IN A NEWSPAPER OF WIDER CIRCULATION IN WALTON COUNTY SO THAT PROPERTY OWNERS WHO PAY THE FIRE DISTRICT TAXES CAN BE AWARE OF THE WORKSHOP. WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED THAT THIS WILL BE DONE.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE FIRE BOARD RAISED THE TAX RATE FOR THE 2009 BUDGET YEAR 8.6%. WITH AN ECONOMY IN RECESSION, WE BELIEVE BUDGET CUTS SHOULD HAVE BEEN MADE INSTEAD OF A TAX INCREASE. FIRE COMMISSIONERS ARE ELECTED TO REPRESENT THE PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES SOUTH OF THE CHOCTAW-HATCHEE BAY. RAISING TAXES DOES NOT REFLECT THE REALITY OF PEOPLE LIVING AND WORKING IN SOUTH WALTON. THE FIRE DISTRICT MUST BEGIN WORKING NOW TO ADJUST SPENDING.

- 1) FROM 2000 THROUGH 2006, THE FIRE DISTRICT ENJOYED ASTRONOMICAL TAX AND IMPACT FEE COLLECTIONS. IMPACT FEES OF \$200 ARE CHARGED ON RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY; 40 CENTS PER SQ. FT. ON COMMERCIAL. THE DISTRICT EXPECTS TO COLLECT \$75,000 THIS YEAR.
- 2) SINCE THE FIRE DISTRICT'S INCEPTION, FIRE COMMISSIONERS HAVE SERVED WITHOUT COMPENSATION, THE ONLY ELECTED BOARD IN WALTON COUNTY TO DO SO. IN MARCH 2007, FIRE COMMISSIONERS VOTED THEMSELVES \$500 A MONTH, WITH A CHOICE OF EITHER STRAIGHT COMPENSATION OR INCLUSION IN THE DISTRICT'S MEDICAL PLAN. THE ANNUAL COST TO TAXPAYERS IS \$42,000.
- 3) IN JUNE 2007, THE FIRE BOARD DISCUSSED IMPLEMENTING FEES FOR FALSE ALARMS AND GOING TO MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS. THE FALSE ALARM FEE IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION; THE FEE FOR MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS IS NOT.
- 4) IN 2007, APPROXIMATELY EIGHT-HUNDRED UNPAID ACCOUNTS FOR EMS SERVICES WERE TURNED OVER TO A COLLECTION AGENCY. APPROXIMATELY \$20,000 TO \$30,000 HAS BEEN COLLECTED
- 5) IN OCTOBER 2008, FIRE COMMISSIONERS AGREED TO WRITE OFF APPROXIMATELY \$500,000 OF UNCOLLECTIBLE EMS DEBT DATING FROM 2001 TO 2005.
- 6) THE 2009 BUDGET ESTIMATES REVENUE FROM EMS FEES OF ABOUT \$625,000. WALTON COUNTY GIVES AN ANNUAL SUBSIDY TO SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT EMS OF ABOUT \$600,000.

SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT - CONTINUED

7) THE 2009 BUDGET REFLECTS \$627,000 FROM THE TDC (TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL) FOR LIFEGUARD SERVICES DURING TOURIST SEASON.

8) IN JUNE 2008, THE FIRE BOARD DISCUSSED FUEL CONSUMPTION MONITORING AND AN AUDIT TO TRACK EXPENDITURES AND OTHER ENERGY SAVING MEASURES. CHIEF TALBERT REPORTS THAT PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO ACCOMPLISH ALL OF THESE.



WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

2009 BUDGET

\$111,138,323 PLUS RESERVES \$8,551,308 - TOTAL \$119,689,631

2008 BUDGET

\$124,981,297 PLUS RESERVES \$14,186,847 - TOTAL \$139,168,144

THANK YOU, WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD, FOR KEEPING THE SAME TAX RATE (MILLAGE) AS LAST YEAR AND FOR NOT RAISING TAXES. THANK YOU FOR REDUCING THE OPERATIONAL PART OF THE BUDGET 11% AND THE TOTAL BUDGET 14%.

THE WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT IS AN INDEPENDENT TAXING AUTHORITY WHICH USES TAX DOLLARS TO EDUCATE APPROXIMATELY 7,000 STUDENTS. THE SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS THE LARGEST BUDGET OF ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE COUNTY. THERE ARE FIVE ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS WHO APPROVE THE BUDGET AND TAX RATE (MILLAGE) EACH YEAR.

THE TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION WAS REPRESENTED AT BOTH BUDGET HEARINGS. AT THE FIRST HEARING, CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER JIM MCCALL PRESENTED A PROPOSED BUDGET AND TAX RATE FOR 2009. SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT CARLENE ANDERSON RECOMMENDED ADOPTION OF THE BUDGET AND TAX RATE WHICH WOULD INCREASE TAXES FROM 2008. BOARD MEMBERS MARK DAVIS AND SHARON ROBERTS RAISED CONCERNS ABOUT INCREASING TAXES IN A DECLINING ECONOMY. THEY WERE OUTVOTED BY THE OTHER THREE BOARD MEMBERS, DARRELL BARNHILL, BILL LAIRD AND MILDRED WILKERSON.

AT THE SECOND AND FINAL BUDGET HEARING, THE ECONOMY WAS IN FULL-BLOWN RECESSION. MR. DAVIS AND MS. ROBERTS WERE JOINED BY MR. BARNHILL AND MR. LAIRD IN OPPOSING THE PROPOSED BUDGET AND TAX INCREASE. THEY VOTED TO KEEP THE 2008 TAX RATE THE SAME AS LAST YEAR. THE SINGLE "NAY" VOTE FOR A LOWER TAX RATE WAS MRS. WILKERSON.

ON OCTOBER 7TH, MR. MCCALL PRESENTED A BUDGET DEFICIT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD OF APPROXIMATELY \$5,275,000. HE RECOMMENDED LOOKING FOR PLACES TO SAVE MONEY AND DEVELOPING A TARGET THAT WOULD SUSTAIN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS. EMPLOYEE SALARIES COMPRISE 87% OF THE OPERATING BUDGET. THE BOARD AND MR. MCCALL UNANIMOUSLY AGREED THAT LAYING OFF EMPLOYEES WOULD BE A STRONGLY-CONTESTED LAST RESORT.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S PERFORMANCE ON FCAT HAS RESULTED IN MANY "A" SCHOOLS. HOWEVER, OVER THE PAST 8 YEARS, OVER 59% OF OUR 10TH GRADERS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO READ AT GRADE LEVEL. WE HAVE SEVERAL LOVELY NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS. WE MUST ENSURE THAT OUR TEACHERS HAVE THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN.

USING THE NON-CAPITAL PORTION OF THE BUDGET ONLY, THE COST TO EDUCATE EACH STUDENT THIS YEAR IS \$15,877. THIS IS MORE THAN MOST PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND MANY COLLEGES CHARGE FOR TUITION.

ARE OUR STUDENTS GETTING \$15,877 WORTH OF EDUCATION?

SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT

2009 BUDGET \$ 1,961,092 - 2008 BUDGET \$ 1,968,668

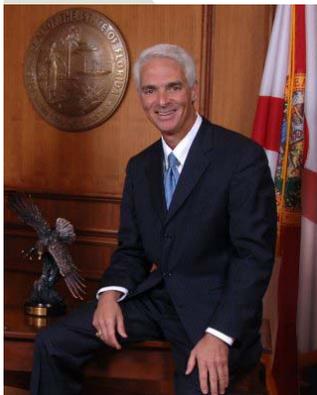
THE SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT INCREASED THE PROPERTY TAX RATE (MILLAGE) 21.7% FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME MOSQUITO CONTROL HAS RAISED THE TAX RATE IN THE PAST TWELVE YEARS. THEY HAVE BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION FOR CONSISTENTLY ROLLING BACK MILLAGE.

THE SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT IS AN INDEPENDENT SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT WHICH PROVIDES SERVICES OVER AN AREA OF APPROXIMATELY 41,447 ACRES. IT IS GOVERNED BY A THREE MEMBER ELECTED BOARD. THEY PAY THEMSELVES \$400 A MONTH AND ARE ELIGIBLE FOR COUNTY HEALTH BENEFITS AND STATE RETIREMENT BENEFITS. THE MOSQUITO DISTRICT WILL RECEIVE ANNUAL STATE AID, \$17,500 FOR 2009.

IN THE PAST YEAR, ONE OF THE THREE BOARD MEMBERS WAS REMOVED FOR NOT BEING A RESIDENT OF WALTON COUNTY. IN NOVEMBER, GOVERNOR CRIST WILL APPOINT SOMEONE TO FILL THE REMAINING TWO YEARS OF THE BOARD MEMBER'S TERM.

MOSQUITO CONTROL HAS ELEVEN FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES AND FOUR PART-TIME. LAST YEAR THE BOARD DID NOT RENEW A CONTRACT WITH THE LONG-TERM DISTRICT DIRECTOR WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN PAID \$116,792. A NEW DIRECTOR WAS HIRED FOR \$65,000.

FLORIDA GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST TAKES 1ST PLACE ON CATO INSTITUTE FISCAL REPORT CARD



**FISCAL
POLICY
REPORT
CARD ON
AMERICA'S
GOVERNORS:
OCTOBER
2008
- CATO
INSTITUTE**

THE TOP OF THE LIST OF THREE WHO RECEIVED AN "A".

THE HIGHEST SCORES WENT TO GOVERNORS WHO PROPOSED OR SIGNED INTO LAW MAJOR TAX CUTS,

RECOMMENDED BUDGET RESTRAINT, AND KEPT SPENDING GROWTH TO A MINIMUM.

IN HIS YEAR AND A HALF IN OFFICE, GOVERNOR CRIST HAS PUSHED THROUGH MAJOR PROPERTY TAX CUTS; SIGNED INTO LAW A MEASURE THAT REQUIRED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO ROLL BACK A PORTION OF PROPERTY TAX INCREASES; AND, SUPPORTED AMENDMENT ONE THAT EXPANDED HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS. THESE MEASURES WILL SAVE FLORIDA TAXPAYERS BILLIONS OF DOLLARS. HIS SPENDING RESTRAINTS HAVE PROPOSED FLAT SPENDING AND HE HAS VETOED WASTEFUL

PORK PROJECTS. GOVERNOR CRIST' REFORMS WILL HELP FOSTER ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE STATE TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE ECONOMY.



A FISCAL REPORT CARD EXAMINED THE TAX AND SPENDING DECISIONS MADE BY GOVERNORS SINCE 2003. STATISTICAL DATA WAS USED TO GRADE GOVERNORS ON THEIR TAXING AND SPENDING RECORDS - THOSE WHO CUT TAXES AND SPENDING THE MOST RECEIVED THE HIGHEST GRADES. THREE GOVERNORS WERE AWARDED AN "A" ON THIS REPORT CARD. GOVERNOR CRIST WAS GRADED THE NO. 1 GOVERNOR IN THE COUNTRY AT



P.O. BOX 1085
SANTA ROSA BEACH, FLORIDA 32459
WEBSITE - WWW.WALTONTAXPAYERS.ORG

NONPROFIT
US Postage
PAID
Santa Rosa Beach, FL
Permit No. 120

WWW.WALTONTAXPAYERS.ORG

MEET CECILIA JONES - OUR NEW DISTRICT 5 COMMISSIONER



CECILIA JONES, A LIFELONG RESIDENT AND THIRTY-FIVE YEAR EDUCATOR OF WALTON COUNTY BELIEVES SHE CAN BRING THE SKILLS SHE ACQUIRED IN TEACHING AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TO THE COUNTY COMMISSION BOARD FOR AN A+ WINNING TEAM.

A GOOD TEACHER HAS VISION, DEVELOPS SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM PLANS, DOES STRATEGIC PLANNING, SOLVES PROBLEMS, AND KNOWS THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE STUDENTS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SUCCESSFUL RESULTS. THESE SAME PRINCIPLES APPLY TO THE COMMISSION BOARD IN A MUCH BROADER SENSE. CECILIA HAS LIVED AND WORKED IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF WALTON COUNTY THUS GIVING HER A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEEDS OF ALL CITIZENS.

CECILIA HELPED START THE FIRST SEARCH AND RESCUE UNIT IN WALTON COUNTY AS CITIZEN SAFETY HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT ISSUE TO HER. SHE IS VERY ACTIVE IN CHURCH AND HAS TAUGHT CHILDREN'S CHURCH, BEEN A YOUTH LEADER AND WORKED WITH OTHER COUNTY LEADERS TO ORGANIZE THE NATIONAL DAY OF

PRAYER.

"MY VISION FOR THIS COUNTY IS A PLACE WHERE WE, OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN CAN GROW UP IN A SAFE HAVEN, ENJOY THE BEAUTY OF OUR ENVIRONMENT AND MAKE A LIVING RIGHT HERE IN WALTON COUNTY IF WE SO CHOOSE."

PLANS HAVE TO BE PUT IN PLACE RIGHT NOW DURING THE ECONOMIC DECLINE THAT HAS HIT THIS AREA SO HARD TO PREPARE THIS COUNTY FOR FUTURE GROWTH AS THE COUNTY BOUNCES BACK TO GOOD TIMES.

A WCTA WELCOME TO
COMMISSIONER JONES