

September 10, 2008

Mr. Mayor and Commissioners:

In view of the fact that our local and national economies are in decline as evidenced by:

1. Nationally increasing record unemployment
2. Locally decreasing employment opportunities
3. Declining retail sales
4. Declining state revenue sharing
5. Declining property values
6. Increasing foreclosures
7. Declining domestic tourist industry
8. Declining local fishing industry
9. A flat real estate market
10. and no new area industry on the horizon

To suggest a permanent increase on the city budget and raising users fees on necessary services , recreational access fees ,and business fees to the hard pressed local population is outrageous and demonstrates a total lack of understanding as to the hardships being endured by the private sector working community.

The fishing and charter industries, the retail sector, contractors, realtors, wait staff, truck drivers and all private sector employers and businesses are struggling with day to day fuel driven expenditures while making less because of a slowing business environment. This is not the time to add to the cities base expense and it is certainly inappropriate to add additional fees to businesses and to the working and fixed income citizens of this community.

If this was your business, your money and your budget was tight---what would you do? You would tighten your belt, lower expenses, give lay off slips and demand more efficiency. You would cut and cut and cut some more and you would tell your departments “This is what you have to spend – use it wisely”. As a voter and taxpayer of this community I expect nothing less.

It’s time to say “No” we can’t afford it...It’s time to say “No” were not going to burden our local businesses and working families and fixed income retirees with more expenses until it’s absolutely necessary.

According to the 2006 demographics estimates, \$30,000 is the median family income for our community and personal income is far less. I am sure these figures did not take into account the financial impact that Dennis has had on personal income for all who work in and support the community. In addition most of us do not have paid health insurance, paid holidays, paid vacations, reduced facility fees, paid retirement, and social security matching, these benefits seem to be a luxury reserved for government employees only. It's time to remind people that their lucky to have a job in this time of economic down turns and that we are all doing with less.....

According to the 2006 statistics we lost 4.4% of the Franklin County population. Ask your self why: Loss of jobs, low wages, high taxes, unaffordable housing and now a proposal to increase user, recreational and business fees. Do you want to lose more of the working sector? Do you want the town to only be a place for the wealthy?

Mr. Mayor and Commissioners please stand up for what's right. Be the leaders that we elected you to be. Hold the line on expenses. Please reconsider implementing permanent budget expenditures and additional fees on your friends and neighbors. The timing is wrong. The economy needs to turn around first.

You may be surprised how the 2000 citizens of Apalachicola will stand behind you. You may even set a precedence that will embarrass our County government into actually leading.

Respectfully,

Jerry Weber