

# MIDWAY: Board considers flat tax

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side source to give the recommendations.

Treasurer Clyde Broome said, "I just think there is no way we can charge a flat fee that people will pay that can possibly cover our whole budget."

Broome presented spread sheets showing 10-year projections for revenues and expenditures. If everything stayed the same as it is today, including the lack of any higher increase in property values, by 2018 Midway Fire District would be \$823,000 "in the hole," Broome said. They will start going into the red with the 2009 budget.

Broome said Midway Fire District protects 12,300 single family units and 700 businesses. The Chief said they are currently responding to 2,000 calls a year, and 700 of those are fire calls.

Buck Thackeray said, "We are charged with protecting 25,000 - 30,000 people. That is the largest community on the peninsula, much larger than

**Without changes, Midway is projected to be in debt by 2009**

Gulf Breeze City. About 95.5 percent of our revenue comes from ad valorem taxes, while only about 23 percent of Gulf Breeze City's revenues comes from ad valorem taxes and the rest from other sources, like water, sewer, tickets."

Midway Fire District's current budget is just under \$3 million a year.

Thackeray said he personally would favor getting away from using ad valorem taxes altogether. "I know whether our firefighters respond to a trailer fire or a \$250,000 house, it costs the same."

Commissioner Joe McPherson agreed, saying, "There are plenty of other sources, also, we can go to for more revenue. Like we could start charging Gulf Power a fee when a line comes down and we have to send a unit to sit there for a couple hours. We

could charge them a fee, but we all know in the end who will really end up paying - it will be passed on to the taxpayers."

Thackeray said, "We charge our residents on their property taxes, but we don't charge anything to government agencies or churches. I am about ready to charge a fee to the schools, for example, for the service we provide. Right now, we are promising fire protection and response for medical calls for all the schools within our district for free. Maybe we should charge an annual fee for that service, as any other service provider does with the school."

Thackeray added one place that might be good to start charging for services is the county annex building in Midway.

"The property appraiser's office suddenly told us this year that we have to come up with \$58,000 that we did not plan for in our budget for services from that office. Well, we have a property appraiser's office right in the middle of Midway to

which we provide protection and services for free. Maybe we should start charging a services fee to them."

Treasurer Broome suggested a service fee of \$58,000 might be fair, which brought chuckles and agreement from both residents and commissioners.

Broome also said he believes the fire commission needs to go to the voters with a proposal to simply raise the ad valorem tax rate from the current 1.4 mills to 1.8 mills, with no additional flat fee.

"I simply do not think a flat fee and a request for even a slight increase in ad valorem taxes will fly with voters," Broome said. "I think we need to keep it simple. And an increase to 1.8 mills would cover us for several years."

A mill generates \$1 for every \$1,000 of property value. An increase from 1.4 mills to 1.8 mills would add up to 40-cents more per \$1,000 in property value on a home. On a \$100,000 home, that would mean an additional \$40 a year.

# Calendar of Events

- Thursday, Aug. 2** Gulf Breeze  
**No meetings scheduled as of press time**
- Friday, Aug. 3**  
**No meetings scheduled as of press time**
- Saturday, Aug. 4**  
 The Pensacola Beach Community Church will have an **Old-Fashioned Cookout** to mark the end of summer from 5-8 p.m. at the church, located at Via de Luna and Avenida 18. Hamburgers, hot dogs and all the fixin's will be prepared. A water slide for children and those young at heart will be available, so bring swimsuits. Everyone is invited and there is no cost. For more information call 850-932-6628.
- The Santa Rosa County Democrats' Monthly Yard Sale**, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., 5746 Stewart Street. Donations may be delivered to the Santa Rosa Democrats' Headquarters Office at the above address, 9-12, Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. For additional information, call Harold Webb, 572-6029 or 623-8040, or Martha Smith, 932-6044 or 225-8181.
- Sunday, Aug. 5**  
**Seeing Sea Life** at Naval Live Oaks, 2 p.m.
- Monday, Aug. 6**  
**City Council Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., Gulf Breeze City Hall, 1070 Shoreline Drive,
- Tuesday, Aug. 7**  
**The Republican Club of Santa Rosa County Monthly Meeting and Dutch Treat Dinner**, 6:30 p.m., Cocodrie's, 8649 Gulf Blvd., Navarre Beach. The guest speaker is Greg Brown, Property Appraiser for Santa Rosa County. This meeting is open to the public. For additional information please contact Morgan Lamb, President at 850-939 2409 or morganlamb@bellsouth.net
- Wednesday, Aug. 8**  
**Santa Rosa Island Authority Board Meeting**, 5 p.m., SRIA Administrative Office, 1 Via De Luna, Pensacola Beach
- Thursday, Aug. 9**  
**School Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., School District Administrative Offices, 5086 Canal Street, Milton
- Santa Rosa County Commission Committee Meeting**, 9 a.m., Commissioner's Board Room, 6495 Caroline Street, Milton

# SENATOR: PIP, budget cuts on agenda

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help 85 percent of small businesses statewide.

After the Rotary meeting, he toured the Andrews Institute and met with physicians and staff of the orthopaedics and sports medicine facility. He also visited the Good Samaritan Clinic on Gulf Breeze Parkway. The majority of

his day was spent at St. Ann Catholic Church where he met with citizens.

During a lunch meeting with Gulf Breeze Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Gaetz said the upcoming special session in September will focus primarily on PIP, or Personal Injury Protection Insurance which is currently required on all automo-

bile policies in the state, and making further cuts to the state budget.

"Here in Northwest Florida we like to look each other in the eye, talk open and straight about our concerns and get to know our public officials face to face on a first-name basis," Gaetz said. "This is the best part of my job."

Sen. Gaetz represents Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa,

Walton, and Bay counties in the Florida Senate. He was elected in 2006. Gaetz chairs the Senate Education Committee and is a member of the Senate Judiciary, Environmental Preservation and Conservation, Health Care Appropriations, Banking and Insurance, and Joint Administrative Procedures committees.

# SHERIFF: Hall asks for \$31.5 million in budget

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went back to his sharp pencil, but says he honestly needs about half a million dollars more than that to operate next year, due to rising costs of factors he has no control over like insurance. He is asking for a budget of \$31.5 million.

But commissioners still insist they do not have any more money than the \$30 million-plus budget of last year, so the sheriff will have to find a way to cut more. The sheriff instead is trying to find a way to raise more money.

"Because of what Tallahassee is doing to us this year, we have to cut over \$2-million from our overall budget for the county," Chairman Tom Stewart explained. "And we have left you harmless, sheriff, by giving you exactly the same budget as last year and not asking you to cut any from that. We have asked some other county departments to cut as much as 10 percent. We just don't have the money to give you more."

Sheriff Hall reported that

currently the sheriff's department employs 425 people, with 180 of those being sworn officers. He has 89 correction officers, and 15 court security as well as 141 support personnel.

To just get down to the almost \$31 million that he is asking from his original request of \$34 million-plus he said he has to cut 11 positions, and also cut out using all the students they had been using and paying in the past few years to help with clerical work.

"We have also dangerously cut our overtime this year," Sheriff Hall said. "Because of the work we do, there is overtime. We cannot be in the middle of a case and say 'sorry Mr. Jones, we cannot investigate your sexual assault anymore because I am into overtime.' But just to get down to the request I have before you, I am again cutting back dangerously on projections for overtime money."

There are also cuts in training, retirement buy out money, computer replacement, and vehicles.

"We usually replace a vehicle when it gets about 145,000 miles on them, but for next year we will not be able to do that," Hall said, adding he would cut 12 vehicles he had planned to purchase.

The budget he is asking for does not add a lot of material items to the department, but just keeps in place what he has in personnel and supply, he said. The culprit is fixed mandated costs, like built in Civil Service pay raises and rising insurance costs. Currently the sheriff department pays \$263 per person a month for the employee only insurance and gives a family insurance subsidy of \$433 per family per month, at an annual cost of just over \$2.5 million a year to the department. And that cost is going up each year.

County Commissioner Gordon Goodin of Navarre said the commission may need to revisit the idea of offering the family insurance subsidy.

"The private sector is moving away from such subsidies too because it is just too costly,"

Goodin said.

Goodin also said there might be an area of savings if the sheriff department and the county combined dispatch services, since they both use separate dispatchers. The sheriff said he had thought that was a good idea when it was first raised months ago.

Sheriff Hall said if the county commission insists on his budget going back to last year's levels, there will need to lay off eight more civilian positions, and six more sworn officers. "There is nothing left in capital outlay to cut," he said.

The sheriff said if the Santa Rosa County School Board can pick up the entire cost of school resource officers for next school year, that will be a large chunk of money he can place back into his budget to bring him closer to his requested numbers. And he is working on a plan involving federal prisoner housing which would bring in over \$350,000 which would be close to making up the difference if combined with the resource officer monies.



Welcome to the world

Zoo officials reported the birth of two animals at The Zoo of Northwest Florida. A male kudu (pictured above) and a female eland were born July 25 and July 28 respectively.

# RECYCLING: Zoo uses shark meat from tourney

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wants to sell us their scrap [metal] we'd be more than happy to make the check out to The Zoo."

Natalie Akin with the zoo said residents could also bring some recyclables to park directly.

"The beverages we sell at the zoo are canned so we can recycle them," Akin said, adding residents could also bring inkjet cartridges and cell phones to be recycled there. Akin said the waste reduction effort nets the zoo approximately \$2,000 per year. When hurricanes struck the Gulf Breeze peninsula in 2004 and 2005, zoo staffers recycled all of the park's organic debris with woodchippers and reused the resulting materi-

al throughout the 50-acre facility.

The Zoo also received shark meat courtesy of the Outcast Mega Shark Tournament in Pensacola on July 29.

In addition to the recycling programs and fundraisers mentioned in previous articles, the zoo is putting together a couple of other fundraisers. Akin said due to the number of requests to organize a number of lemonade stand fundraisers, park officials are planning a county wide lemonade stand zoo charity day. Although no date has been set, Akin said the effort showed great local support for the park.

"It shows that this community wants to support their zoo," Akin said. "It shows that there is true ownership for the zoo in this community."

Zoo officials announced last month that the facility needs to raise \$1 million by the end of 2007 and \$3 million within a year to keep its doors open.

Zoo management is collecting many pledges but did not have an exact number of dollars donated as of press time.

However, Kenneth and Elizabeth Woolf, the Vigodsky Family Charitable Foundation, C. C. and Shirley Mertins have all made donations of \$1,000 or more. Mary L. Anderson, David A. Bush, James and Margaret Espy, Terry and Sandra Adair, John G. Haass, Donna J. Rigby, Unity of Gulf Breeze, Stephen and Erin Sutton, George and Fredrica Prettyman, Roberta G. Sprague, Warren and Elizabeth Shepherd, Mary L. Anderson and Marilyn K. Milmore have

all made donations of \$100 or more. William and Cheryl Jones, James and Giulina Wiesner, Cheryl D. Neumann, Thomas and Carolyn Cruise, Sydney Beck, Mark and Melissa Pavich, William and Cheryl Jones, Jeffrey and Angelique Waldorff, Nathan Waldorff, Joe and Rita Harris, Joanne P. Wardlaw, Thomas and Edith Maltese, Phyllis Kulig, Alan A. Finkelstein, John and Helen Ward, Joseph and Sheila Hilwig, June M. Coles and Charles and Mary Jo Stout have made donations of up to \$100.

Akin said many more have donated anonymously, or are yet to be added to the preceding list. For a more updated list of private donors and business partners, visit www.thezoonorthwestflorida.org.

# Elected Officials CONTACT

- GULF BREEZE ELECTED OFFICIALS**  
 1070 Shoreline Dr., Gulf Breeze, FL 32561; (850) 934-5100
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- SANTA ROSA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
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- DIANE SCOTT, Dist. 1**  
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- DAVE MURZIN (R)**  
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- RAY SANSOM (R)**  
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- FLORIDA STATE SENATOR**
- DON GAETZ (R)**  
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 US Court House Annex, 111 N. Adams St., Tallahassee, FL 32301  
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**Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office Report**

Information provided by the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office.

**Felonies**

**7/24/07**  
 Czarnacki, Rodney Warren, 36, W/M, 9000 block of Quail Roost Drive, Navarre, larceny more than \$300 and less than \$5000

**7/25/07**  
 Neblett, Candy Sue, 47, W/F, 2000 block of Oakey Court, Navarre, failure to appear

**7/26/07**  
 Guerrero, Sergio Luiss, 18, H/M, 2000 block of Settlers Colony Boulevard, Gulf Breeze, damage property more than \$1000

**7/28/07**  
 Neely, Ryan Scott, 21, W/M, 1000 block of College Parkway, Gulf Breeze, aggravated assault

**DUI**

**07-27-07**  
 Marshall, Todd David, 48, W/M, 1000 block of Kell Road, Gulf Breeze, DUI

**Aiken, Tiffany Angel, 23, W/F, 8000 block of Laredo Street, Navarre, resist officer**

**Krossman, Vincent Andrew, 29, W/M, 2000 block of Venetian Way, Gulf Breeze, violation of probation**