

PUBLIC SAFETY

Over the last few decades the County has stopped providing direct Fire Service, Emergency Medical Services and Law Enforcement. The last vestiges of Fire and EMS were given to the Sheriff's Office several years ago. Nonetheless, the County has a responsibility for the continuity of public safety throughout the County and not just in the four square miles of unincorporated Broward County. One aspect of this countywide provision of public safety is a rapid response to calls for help for emergencies reported to 911. The County had a unique opportunity to conserve valuable resources by consolidating the emergency call taking, as well as police and fire dispatch. The implemented plan has three call taking and dispatch centers unlike the previous configuration that had many haphazardly located centers throughout the county. This consolidation resulted in a small increase in Ad Valorem taxes, which was to be offset by decreases in call taking and dispatch times, as well as saving taxpayers through greater efficiencies. This new program needs to be reviewed quickly and it must have an honest assessment as to what needs to be done to guarantee the metrics established by the municipal users are met or exceeded. I believe the initial plan was solid but its implementation was anything but solid.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Of all the major monetary risks we face in Broward County government, two of the most threatening are the continuing weak economy and the impact of the not-fully-implemented Affordable Care Act. It is an undeniable fact, the Affordable Care Act will have financial impact on the County. First, full-time County and BSO employees receive medical coverage paid for, in varying amounts, by the County. These costs are expected to rise, potentially squeezing out funding for many important programs. The first plan of government is to raise taxes. I believe County Commissioners have a propensity to spend all the revenues and ask for more. In reality, taxes can remain in check and government services can continue unabated. Taxes should never be the first answer. Determining whether we are in all of the right business and doing our work efficiently and effectively should be the

first and usually is the best answer. We need to determine where there is still waste and cut it. The recession and lower revenues from Ad Valorem taxes was a teaching moment for both the County Commission and County Administration. They learned you can still run county government with less revenues.

WORKFORCE

The County's workforce has many good people who want to do a good job. I have been to every department, including the Airport and Sea Port when I was with BSO and when I was the Director of Emergency Management and have met hundreds of members of the county workforce. Many are long-time employees who have seen the County grow. Most have gone for almost a decade with only a minimal number of paltry raises. If we want a dedicated workforce, we must pay them a decent wage. Then we must give them good direction and have them work on projects and programs that directly improve the lives of the residents and increase business opportunities, especially relating to jobs. I believe we need to implement a plan to provide our employees a guaranteed annual salary increase based on merit.

BUSINESS

As I meet with business owners throughout the County the most common concern I hear is that government oftentimes seems like they are opponents to business instead of supporters. Businesses in the County need a responsible and supportive government. One that will not slow them down by needless red tape or fees that do nothing to help businesses grow. When business owners are confident their moderate to long-term business outlooks are good, they will expand their businesses, resulting in hiring and a better local economy. The County must do everything within its control to attract and maintain good businesses that put people to work. The recent calamity with Uber demonstrates how not to treat potential clean businesses. In other towns throughout the United States, Uber has provided thousands of people in those communities full time work or part time work to augment their current salaries. It was not the negotiations that were the problem but the fact they were treated as a threat to the status quo, not as a welcomed new business

that will provide opportunities to thousands in this community. We must encourage Uber and other companies, especially clean high technology companies, to expand into Broward County.

TEXTING WHILE DRIVING

A few years ago the State Legislature wrestled with changing how phones are used in vehicles. At that time they were only able to make texting while driving a secondary offense. A traffic law offender can only be ticketed when another offense caused the person to be stopped by the police in the first place. There were several television and bumper sticker campaigns to help people realize the dangers of texting while driving. I am sure we can all agree that those campaigns have not decreased this enormously dangerous practice. In fact, the problem has grown more pervasive, impacts others while driving and endangers all of us. The Broward County Commission cannot enact anything that will abate this crisis but they can work with other county commissions and Sheriffs to pressure the State Legislature into passing a responsible “hands free” law for the use of cellular phones in vehicles. I will champion that law.