

Tallahassee Reports

POSTAL CUSTOMER

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The Reports

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Commissioner Miller Could Be Deciding Vote on Appointed Ethics Officer

Over the next few months the City Commission is scheduled to take up the recommendations of the City's Ethics Advisory Panel.

The Panel met 18 times over the last year and presented a number of recommendations to the City Commission on July 10th. The recommendations addressed issues that include financial disclosure, business relationships, ethics training and the appointment of an ethics officer.

The most divisive issue addressed by the Panel had to do with the appointment of an ethics officer. The Panel ultimately recommended a Charter level official as the City's Ethics Officer.

Before voting on the recommendations, the City Commissioners will at-



Nancy Miller could be deciding vote.

tend a workshop on October 16th.

How did the Ethics Advisory Panel arrive at recommending a Charter level official as the City's Ethics Officer?

During the 17th meeting of the City's Ethics Advisory Panel, on Monday June 10, the issue of oversight authority was front and center. The question of who an Ethics Officer would report to had been lingering over the meetings. While the discussions had been cordial, it was obvious that a divide on the issue was developing.

Would the Ethics Officer, who will be responsible for implementing the new ethics rules, report to the City Attorney or would another structure, with more autonomy, be recommended to the City

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Cascades Park Restaurant To Be Financed By \$2.1 Million in Tax Dollars

The Tallahassee City Commission is struggling to find money for police officers and bus drivers. Some Commissioners have questioned the costs associated with the ethics officer recommended by a blue ribbon panel.

But when it comes to financing The

Electric building in Cascades Park.

In September 2011 the City Commission directed Staff to present options related to the reuse of the old electric building. A request for proposal was subsequently released to solicit interest for a public/private

City Commission authorized the City Manager to negotiate an agreement with the Company for the renovation and lease. Original funding for this purpose was identified as \$1,355,714 in tax dollars with the private partner contribution of \$1,548,286.

During the course of finalizing the plans, the architect of record for the project identified the need for up to \$1.3 million in additional funding that would be required to bring the facility up to a leasable state with some attractive amenities. This addition brings the total project costs to \$3,667,020 with an investment of \$2.1 million in tax dollars.

Some of the amenities that tax dollars will be used for include a \$56,000 allowance for bar and rest room cabinetry and counter tops, tile and etched concrete flooring, \$30,000 for interior lighting, electric hand dryers and seven coat hooks.

The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) has committed \$816,789 towards the \$2.1 million in renovation costs, thus there is a

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- On July 10, 2013 City Commission voted 5-0 to spend about \$2.1 million on a restaurant in Cascades Park.
- Tax dollars will go towards bar and rest room cabinetry and counter tops, tile and etched concrete flooring.
- City Commission voted to move money from Public Works projects to finance restaurant.

Brew Pub restaurant - the City has no problem finding money.

Tallahassee Reports has reviewed documents that reveal the City of Tallahassee will spend \$2.1 million in tax dollars to finance the Brew Pub restaurant to be located in the historic Old

partnership to implement a brew pub type establishment at the site with the City retaining ownership and leasing the use of the facility.

Proof Brewing Company of Tallahassee was the highest ranked respondent and on October 24, 2012, the

Will New Gas Tax Result in More Road Maintenance Expenditures?

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners have passed a five cent gas tax.

The tax will raise approximately \$4 million which will be split between the City and the County.

During a lunch meeting with NEBA, a local small business group, on August 13th, County Commissioners had an opportunity to discuss their rationale for supporting the tax.

The most popular rationale was the fact that it was a usage tax - the more you drive the more you pay. Also, County Commissioner Mary Ann Lindley pointed out that the increase in the gas tax will allow Leon County to qualify for more state trans-

portation tax money. Other Commissioners noted that it is a tax that is paid by people that live outside Leon County, but travel the roads to get to work.

And finally, it was highlighted that the materials used to maintain roads - asphalt - is a petroleum based product that has significantly increased in price over the last five years and the revenue is needed to maintain the transportation infrastructure.

However, the \$4 million question is, will the 5 cent gas tax result in more expenditures for road maintenance?

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Au Pêche Mignon French Pastry Shop Expands



Au Pêche Mignon, a locally owned pastry shop that opened in the fall of 1991, is remodeling its location in Market Square to accommodate more customers and expand their offerings.

Au Pêche Mignon's menu currently consists of delicate pastries in the case, pies, quiche, croissants, brioche and more recently chocolates and bread baked in the store.

They also have begun providing European-styled light lunches made from imported cheeses that the shop had been carrying and the deli-

icious bread they had been producing.

The expansion will double the size of the shop from 1600 sq ft to 3200 sq ft. After they

complete the multi-stage transition, they will have approximately 40-50 seats inside and 20 seats outside.

Joseph and Lisa Gans, the current owners who purchased the shop in 2002, said in the beginning "we had only three tables inside and two outside with a total seating of around 12. The layout was simple and appealing to the eye when a customer would visit." Now they see a rebound in the economy and an opportunity to grow their business.

Like many small business owners, the Gans' love

the work they do and take chances and make sacrifices to continue their dream. Lisa received a rich, elaborate and classically detailed apprenticeship from the previous owner of the shop.

Before the economic downturn, Joseph traveled to Switzerland to work for a short period in a Confiserie owned by a colleague whose large staff of 25 Pastry Chefs produced fine pastries, chocolates, and bread. "This was a divine experience" said Joseph Gans.

While he was gone, Lisa, with their young son, ran the shop. The expansion comes after a tough time dealing with the downturn in the economy. To survive they did what small business owners do: they made adjustments and changes. They took additional work on themselves and

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Business Trends: Leon County Employment Improves

The unemployment rate is one of the most watched economic statistics. And with the slow creation of jobs during this longer than normal recovery from the Great Recession, it has become even more visible.

The media and political pundits wait each month for the unemployment rate to be revealed and begin writing about the implications for the recovery.

However, the unemployment rate can also be one of



the most misleading economic statistics. A favorable rate can actually occur with a combination of fewer people seeking work and less people actually working. Ultimately, the economy is impacted by the number of people working.

The chart, "Average Number

of Workers in Leon County, 2005-2013", shows that the

Great Recession hit Tallahassee's work force in 2008 and 2009.

In 2007, Leon County had 141,132 people working and had a history of adding approximately 2500 new

Leon County has added 3,205 jobs over the last 12 months

workers each year since 1990.

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Will City Commissioners Approve Ethics Panels Decision for Independent Ethics Officer?

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Commission.

The previous meeting set the stage for the debate. Lila Jaber, the Panel member responsible for presenting a recommendation, had proposed that the Ethics Officer report to the City Attorney and if issues with elected officials arose, the City Attorney would contract with an outside consultant to handle the investigation.

However, the Panel pushed back on Jaber's approach, with some Panel members seeking more autonomy for the Ethics Officer. The meeting concluded shortly after Chairperson Barnett recommended elevating the Ethics Officer to a Charter level position with a citizens advisory board providing oversight.

For the next meeting, Chairperson Barnett asked the Panel to review their notes on the issue and asked staff to provide information to the Panel members on how Jacksonville, where an Ethics Officer position was recently created, handled the oversight issue.

The stage was set. At the next meeting, the Ethics Panel would decide the most controversial issue left on the table.

The discussion on oversight authority began with Panel member Jaber. She stated that she had reviewed what had been proposed and took into account the public comments and concluded that there was no need to change her original recommendation - the Ethics Officer should report to the City Attorney.

After a couple of attempts by Panel member Jay Landers to fine tune Jaber's recommendation, former Supreme Court Judge Harry Anstead delivered an impassioned fifteen minute speech.

Panel member Anstead said that he had been influenced by the public hearings and by the reasoning of Chairperson Barnett for an appointed Ethics Officer. On Barnett's proposal he said, "This is what we should strive for in ethics and professionalism: something to hold up to what government should be."

For those who argued against the proposal because of cost and another "layer of bureaucracy", he said, "the city's budget is \$750 million, the cost to properly fund an Ethics Officer position would be insignificant" and "one more citizen advisory board among the 30 City boards already active should not be a problem."

He finished by saying that "Tallahassee is the capital of the fourth largest state. We are missing a golden opportunity to distinguish Tallahassee if we don't do this. Ethics and professionalism is the heart of public service."

Panel member Jaber responded by saying "I fail to see why the City Attorney can't do this job."

But the mood of Panel was clear when member Brent Copeland spoke. He stated his support for Chairperson Barnett's proposal and said that while all other issues, to this point, had been decided by consensus, it was okay if this difficult issue was not. The vote was 5-2, with Panel members Jaber and Landers voting no.

Now what about City Commission?

Based on public statements and inquiries by Tallahassee Reports it appears the City Commission is split on the question of oversight authority. Both Scott Maddox and Andrew Gillum have made public statements that indicate they favor something less than what was recommended by the Ethics Advisory Panel. While Mayor John Marks and Commissioner Gill Ziffer have indicated that they will support a Charter level Ethics Officer.

This leaves Commissioner Nancy Miller. When contacted by Tallahassee Reports, she would only say that she is still reviewing the information provide by the Ethics Panel and that she has not made a final decision.

Will New Gas Tax Result in More Road Maintenance Expenditures?

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The City Commission weighed-in on this question and their answer was no. The majority of their share of the gas tax, approximately \$2 million, will go to fund Star Metro operations.

The County Commissioners had a chance to answer that question when it was asked by the moderator of the discussion at NEBA, but the Commissioners chose to discuss their rationale for supporting the tax and never provided an answer about how the new tax would effect the level of road maintenance expenditures.

In 2013, Leon County budgeted \$13.5 million for road maintenance projects. A new gas tax that generates approximately \$2 million should increase that budgeted amount and result in more expenditures for maintaining roads and bridges.

However, it is not that simple.

Approximately \$4.3 million of the \$13.5 million budgeted in 2013 for road and bridge maintenance was funded by a subsidy from other revenue funds. So the question is, if the gas tax passes, will revenue dedicated to road and bridge maintenance increase or will the gas tax revenue take the place of the other revenues that have subsidized the road maintenance over the last five years?

Commissioners weigh in on Ethics officer



"If, in fact, we need that kind of independent ethics officer, we have got to find the money to pay for it...If that is what people want — if that is the best way to handle this situation — the issue of ethics transcends the need to find the money."

-John Marks



"I am still reviewing the information from the Ethics Advisory Panel."

-Nancy Miller



Maddox has indicated an ethics officer position would be best handled by the City Attorney. "That position would be based on law"... "Maybe it would be handled better by someone with that sort of background."

-Scott Maddox



"I'm in favor of all the recommendations but want more information on cost to taxpayers over possible options."

-Gil Ziffer



"The recommendation was to establish an independent individual, but I believe this is beyond what our budget will allow...I believe we can achieve the reasonable expectation of the panel by shifting these responsibilities to the city auditor."

-Andrew Gillum

Cascades Park Restaurant To Be Financed By \$2.1 Million in Tax Dollars

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funding shortfall of \$1,301,945.

How did the City find this money in these tough budgetary times?

To fund the above shortfall, City Staff proposed reallocating funds from two public works projects that had been completed under budget. The amounts reallocated to the renovations were \$893,239.93 and \$408,000.

City staff indicated that since some of the public works funds are from a sales tax bond, to reallocate these funds will require a public hearing as the new use is

for a project other than what was originally approved by voters. This will be accomplished during the annual budgeting process.

The City Commission voted 5-0 to accept City Staff's recommendation for funding the project on July 10, 2013.

Since that vote, other facts about the project have come to light.

The original bid winner for the project, Proof Brewery, has decided not to move forward with the project.

Faced with this development, City staff decided not to rebid project, but to continue negotiations with a new company called Cascades Holdings.

In addition, Tallahassee Reports has learned that the sole manager of Cascades Holding is the current campaign treasurer for Mayoral candidate Andrew Gillum.

Stay tuned for developments in this story at TallahasseeReports.com.

Watch the video of the vote on TallahasseeReports.com



The old City of Tallahassee Electric Building, built in 1921 located in Cascades Park.

Incumbents Get In Early, Raise Cash

The summer of 2013 is coming to an end and there has been little talk in the media about the up coming local election cycle.

The primary is eleven months away and a total of six seats on the County and City Commissions are up for election in 2014.

With City Commissioner Andrew Gillum announcing a run for Mayor, his current seat will also become available.

While the chatter in the media has been rather quiet, there is plenty of action behind the scenes.

As of September 1, 2013, among the seven seats up for election, five incumbents have already filed paperwork to run for reelection and accept contributions.

And for the City Commission incumbents, the contributions are pouring in!

For the three city races, Commissioner's Nancy Miller, Gil Ziffer, and Andrew Gillum have raised over \$220,000.

Is this unusual? At this time during the 2010 election cycle there were six seats up for election and not

one incumbent had announced their intentions to run and not one dollar had been raised by a sitting elected official.

Why the early dash for cash during this election cycle? Memories from 2010!

Remember the 2010 local election cycle?

The 2010 election cycle was one of the most chaotic and contentious in recent memory. Four incumbents were challenged by well financed candidates and the sparks flew.

In the end, veteran County Commissioners Bob Rackleff and Cliff Thael ended up losing to current county Commissioners Nick Maddox and Kristen Dozier.

And while both City incumbents, Ziffer and Marks, won, the races were close and the issues from those races still resonate today.

With the 2010 election cycle in mind, the three current City Commissioner's running for office are not waiting for challengers to come forward.

Instead, they are busy holding fund-raisers and asking support-

ers for cash with the hope that any challengers will be deterred from entering the fray.

The two incumbent County Commissioners up for reelection, Maddox and Dozier, have filed paperwork, but have yet to report any contributions.

What effect will all of this have on potential challengers?

Only time will tell. But 2010 appears to be a little different than 2014. The 2010 cycle was full of longtime incumbents. Mayor Marks was seeking his 3rd term as Mayor, County Commissioner Cliff Thael was seeking his 5th term, and County Commissioner Bob Rackleff was seeking his 4th term.

This will not be the case in 2014.

Of the six incumbents running in 2014 (this assumes Mayor Marks will not run), four are seeking their second full term, Gillum is seeking his first term as Mayor, and County Commissioner John Dailey, if he runs, would be seeking his 3rd term.

But stay tuned in, the deadline for getting in a local race is not until June of 2013.

Local Government

City Pension Costs are a Silent Budget Drain

The City Commission has avoided raising property taxes this year and instead has relied on an increase in the gas tax and one time



transfer from reserve funds to reach a balanced budget.

The recent workshops on the City's budget have revealed that one of the major dynamics driving the \$5 million general deficit

this year and the projected shortfalls over the next few years revolves around Star Metro. The discussion by City Commissioners indicate that changes have to be made to Star Metro so that the general fund subsidy does not continue to

increase. However, one area that re-

ceived no discussion during this budget cycle - despite a major increase over the previous year spending - is employee pensions. Budget documents show that the City contributions to employee pension funds in 2014 increased 28%, or \$2.2 million, over the 2013 budget.

Tallahassee Reports contacted City budget staff about the increase and was told that a new state law required that the City increase the funding for their pension plans. This requirement resulted in an increase in the employer contribution from 10.0% to 13.4%. The employee contribution remained at 3.75%. This makes the City's contribution over 3.5 times

greater than the employee's contribution. How does this compare to the private sector and to other local governments?

In the private sector, for most businesses, the employee's pension program is Social Security. In that program, the employer and employee contribution is split

50%/50%. Tallahassee Reports was able to verify that the City of Jacksonville requires their employees to contribute 7% and the City of Gainesville requires their employees to

contribute 5%.

More than one City source has indicated that the City has punted on the employee pension issue, but that it will have to be addressed soon to break the projected cycle of general fund budget deficits. "Just keep an eye on the current negotiations with the police union, this could be

employee pension funds in 2014 increased 28%

an indicator of how the general employee pension fund will be addressed next year" said the source.

Au Pêché Mignon French Pastry Shop Expands

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stopped outsourcing things as simple as laundry and started doing major repairs themselves. These repairs included welding broken steel tables, changing broken panes of glass, and constructing shelves after older ones had collapsed.

Joseph Gans said "even with all of this, we got moving again. All the time never doing the one thing we deemed to be the doom of any bakery or restaurant. We never lowered our quality. Not to save a penny or a dollar. We didn't even raise our prices through the rough patch. Everyone was dealing with what we were, how could we try to pass the buck and try to pass an inferior product on the customers that had so loyally trusted

our name and creations for so long?"

It seems to be a consistent rallying point. Never, ever lower the quality. Just improve the way you do it to continue to ensure the products are affordable to the community.

They say that several times they have been presented options that would save money here and there. But without batting an eye they refused to compromise quality, feeling that it would be sacrilege. More room from customers is not the only reason for the expansion. "We will have dedicated workspaces in our kitchen and for our front of the house staff," said Gans.

The expansion will facilitate two separate kitchen spaces to produce chocolates



"More than double the seating, with 40-50 seats inside and 20 seats outside."

and the gluten free items they are so passionate about. "We have, for some time, wished to pursue the route of gluten free products but knew that within our current kitchen it would be impossible," said Gans

It was with the discovery of their son's gluten intolerance that they began to educate themselves into the depths of this facet of bak-

ing. What they thought was an intolerance has turned out to be much worse. With any exposure he has a severe reaction. The separated kitchen will not share doorways, air supplies or utensils with the normal baking kitchen.

"It is our goal to continue to produce the quality confections that people like our son have developed the love of, but now cannot enjoy

without suffering. We have already been able to produce a large number of our creations without wheat or gluten products. When we achieve a bread of outstanding quality, that is also gluten free, then we will have been able to feel the accomplishment of providing the replacement so needed in our own home and our community," said Gans.

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More than 44 businesses have already obtained refunds in the amount of \$98,837 from the City of Tallahassee.

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Opinion

Pull the Plug On the Brew Pub!

In the best of times, a city government spending \$2.1 million to renovate a government owned building to facilitate a restaurant would be tough to justify. But given the facts surrounding the City of Tallahassee's venture into what is now called the Brew Pub at Cascades Park, it is hard to believe that the City Commission could vote 5-0 to move forward with such a project.

Understand, it is not hard to believe that City Commissioners would support using funds from the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) to get into the restaurant business. They have already invested your tax money in hotels, student housing projects, and commercial office space. But could they vote to use sales tax dollars earmarked for public works projects to build a restaurant? Sadly, the answer is yes.

Last year the CRA voted to spend approximately \$800,000 to renovate the Old Electric Building located in Cascades Park to accommodate a restaurant. The original investment of CRA funds turned out not to be sufficient to properly fund the project. But this did not deter the City.

When an analysis determined that more money was needed for this venture, the City Commission voted on July 10, 2013 to move \$1.3 million in funds left over from public works projects to the Brew Pub project. Yes, tax money dedicated to improving roads and our City's infrastructure is being used to finance a restaurant.

This transfer of your tax dollars comes during a budget cycle that started with a \$5 million deficit that will ultimately be addressed by an increase in the gas tax and a delay in hiring additional police officers.

Raise taxes, cut police officers....and build a restaurant!

Raise taxes, cut police officers....and build a restaurant!

And that's not all. The fact that the original bid winner pulled out of the project did not deter the City either. Instead of rebidding the project, the City Commission voted 5-0 to sign a contract with a new business entity that was created 10 days before the vote to add an additional \$1.3 million to the project budget. And by the way, the owner of this new business entity is the campaign treasurer for

Mayoral candidate Andrew Gillum.

Beyond the budget implications and the insider dealings, this project is a text book example of the consequences of government getting into a business that operates just fine in the free market.

First, there is the irony of restaurant owners in Leon County paying taxes that go to fund a business that will be their competition. And then there is the City spending on food.

The City of Tallahassee spends approximately \$130,000 a year on food. Several different vendors provide the food. However, one must ask, if the City has a vested interest in a restaurant, does this mean they will start buying food from "their" restaurant at the expense of other restaurants they have traditionally supported?

Ironically, it was Commissioner Gillum that voted to tear down the building years ago because it was not worth saving. But he lost that vote. And now he has to deal with a project that could be a poster child for crony capitalism, even though, personally, he has no financial interest in the restaurant.

Look, lots of people want to go to a place where everyone knows their name, but the City Commissioners, led by Commissioner Andrew Gillum, need to do the right thing and pull the plug on the Brew Pub!

Journalistic Ethics: Deciding Which Critically Ill Person Gets Coverage

By Deni Elliott

Skyrocketing medical costs. Growing competition for available donor organs and other life-saving treatments. An increasingly media "savvy" public who knows that news coverage of their family member's illness can mean thousands of dollars for medical bills and the difference between life and death.

Add these factors up and the only answer is: Newsrooms can expect a proliferation of requests for "help" from people vying for coverage of their loved one's plight. The call which now comes to the news desk every few months about the sick child needing money for a bone marrow transplant or the loving mother of four waiting for a kidney donor will eventually be coming weekly, maybe daily.

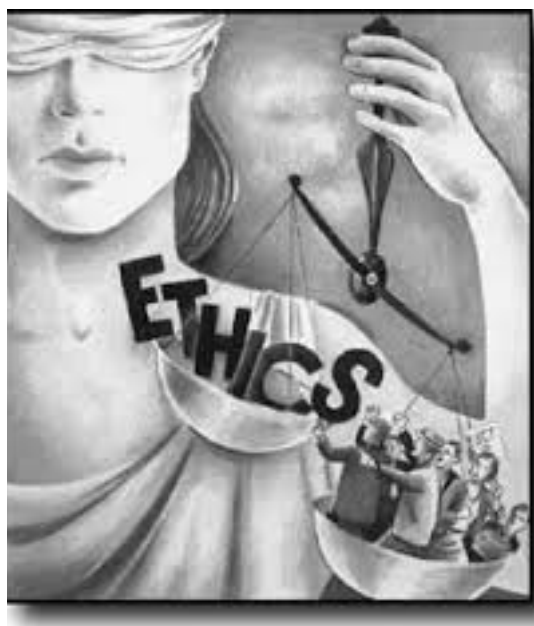
So how are newsrooms handling these requests for coverage? How should they be?

Response to the problem of medical need runs the gamut from community newspapers like the Free Press in Mankato, MN, giving everyone at least a "mention" to newspapers like the Atlanta Journal and Constitution having an informal policy against doing stories on individual cases.

Mike King, science and medical writer at the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, is asked "about once a month" to write about a sick child in need.

"I have to say to them that there are lots of people that need money for medical care, but who don't get the opportunity to raise money through the news media," he said.

King handles the problem by trying to help readers understand the broader social issues. He writes about the increasing shortage of donor organs, the high costs of health care,



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and about the inequity of who gets specialized medical attention.

Dick Knox, senior medical writer for The Boston Globe writes about individual need cases only as illustration of the larger problem of public policy. "We have decided in this country that police and fire services ought to be universally available no matter who needs them. We haven't decided that with medical care."

Other news organizations report on individual cases if they are considered "special." A case which succeeded in meeting this criteria involved 7-year old Norma Lynn Peterson from Windham, ME. She received a new liver at the Pittsburgh transplant center last July. News coverage netted her family \$100,000 to help offset medical costs not covered by insurance. She also got a video camera, a truckload of toys, and a new puppy from strangers alerted to her situation.

The news directors from Maine's three television stations said that how the community responded to the little girl made her news. But Norma Lynn's parents and their main fund raiser see it differently.

The news coverage caused the overwhelming community response, they say, not the other way around. The family's fund raiser knew if one television station came out to just one event, the rest would follow. And, they did.

Norma Lynn was not the only sick child in Maine last summer nor the only transplant recipient. She was not the patient with the most financial need. But she was the only one who got news coverage.

Maine's TV news directors all agree that they wouldn't cover every sick child in need of financial assistance. "Our business is not to raise money," Jeff Marks, news director at WCSH-TV, said, "our business is to tell an interesting story."

"If we tried to do every transplant, we'd be doing the transplant hour," said Jim Sanders, WGME-TV news director.

If news organizations choose to cover individual need cases, they should do more than allow the medium to be used for fund raising. Since the station or newspaper is, in effect, endorsing private contributions by providing news coverage, it should at least give the audience information about how that money will be used.

How much money does the individual really need? The public should know if Medicaid or health insurance is covering part of the cost. Has a foundation been set up to handle contributions? What are the limitations on how donated money can be used?

The determination that one person's need is newsworthy must be stronger than good P.R. Economic realities guarantee that editors and news directors who decide these stories ad hoc will soon be faced with explaining to a relative why last week's bone marrow transplant was news, but this week's isn't.

THE MISSION

OUR PURPOSE is to enhance our community by providing information about the decisions and actions of local governments in Leon County.

OUR GOAL is to provide the community with a source of local news that can be trusted to be independent and free of conflicts of interest.

To that end, employees of Tallahassee Reports will not sit on any governmental boards and Tallahassee Reports will not accept any advertising from local government entities.

Community Interaction

ON THE CASCADES PARK BREW PUB

Will someone please hurry up and give the mayor a paid board member position at Proof so we can get this thing off the ground already?

This brew is starting to stink and the City's share of the investment should be withdrawn immediately.

This article goes to show that the citizens of Tallahassee get what they vote for. It also shows that these politicians that have their best interest in mind while doing the "business of the people" get what they pay for. Only, they don't use their own money, they use the money of people.

The CRA's began with a noble purpose but have evolved into political pay offs. A CRA should have a limited life span. Do citizens realize that money is that much less for the general fund & that much more for the rest of us to pay in taxes?

Why do we need a permanent restaurant at the Park? Isn't that what Food Trucks are for?

We get enough B.S. shoved down our throats by the Fed Govt, on a local level this is unacceptable and we need to tell them this little idea is NOT going to fly.

Using Proof Brewing in name only is a thinly-disguised sham that has already been outed. This is a bad invest-

ment for everyone including the taxpayers. Secure the building and leave it as a landmark or tear it down.

Isn't it comforting to know that our tax dollars are being invested in what is termed "a risky venture for a private entity" by Government Bureaucrats, who, we all know are far, far wiser than the "free market." Can you say Solyndra? It is also comforting that these subsidies are being provided to political friends. If I was running a restaurant or any business in Tallahassee, I'd be asking myself "why am I paying taxes to support my competition?"

Well this article from Tallahassee Reports confirms who will be managing the brew pub in Cascades. I didn't realize he was Commissioner Gillum's campaign treasurer. While I doubt this is illegal, it sure has a stink to it and that's from someone (me) that rarely buys into these type theories. Still wondering why the Proof deal dissolved?

Politics are so boring to me... Gimme the bar, and be done with it.

Submit your comment to:
TallahasseeReportsNow@gmail.com and you may see it in our next publication.

Opinion

You Can Fight City Hall - Or The DHSMV

By Paul Henry

The Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) has published a document called "Traffic Crash Facts" (TCF) since at least 1994. The publication listed all sorts of data about crashes in Florida, one of which was what caused them. That changed in 2011 when the data placed online was very limited.

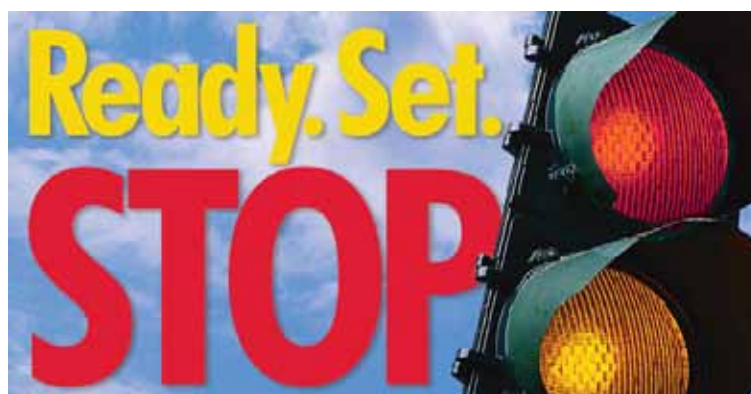
The cause of crashes is key when assessing the effectiveness of things such as red light cameras (RLC). If you believe most local officials using them, they are only installed for safety. Ultimate safety is not having anyone run a red light and cause a crash. The worst type of these crashes are when someone dies, so the best evidence of their effectiveness is the amount of fatal crashes caused by a red light violation (RLV).

When you look at the TCF reports for the past several years, you can determine trends in crashes. In the past several years, the number of fatal crashes caused by a

RLV were already declining, with 53 in 2010, down from 123 in 2006. In 2011, the first full year of legal RLC use in Florida, it was... well we didn't know since the DHSMV didn't release the data as they had done for so many years.

I've been working against the RLC program since 2011 for a number of reasons, be they legal or operational. It's not because I've gotten a ticket. Unlike most people in Florida, due to my time as a trooper and traffic homicide investigator, I knew that the crashes caused by a RLV were mainly caused by two types of drivers- inattentive, and impaired, such as a DUI. I also realized placing a camera on a pole at roadside would not magically awaken or make sober these drivers.

One of the things I have never seen in the media is an actual number comparison of RLV crashes before and after automated for-profit device use. This led me to meet with



the Department of Transportation (DOT) and get traffic crash data for the period of 2005-2011. I've used this data to disprove the effectiveness of the automated for-profit RLC

scheme in Florida. I found in Tallahassee, for equal periods of time, there

were 9 RLV crashes at the device intersections before they got a device, and 7 afterward. As a side note here, the state's much-touted annual report on the devices lists no ac-

tual numbers- and no crashes caused by a RLV at all, and the three types of crashes they do list (rear end, angle, and total) are shown by percentage.

Since I had this data, it was fairly easy to pull the number of 2011 fatal crashes caused by a RLV. I did so, and not surprisingly they were higher than they had been in 2010. A lot higher, there were 72 of them, percentage wise about 36% higher. This is a black eye for the RLC program.

I found the DHSMV Director Jones had written a letter in November 2012, stating a portal would be online for 24/7 public access in the spring of 2013. Since it was now Summer/August, I sent

an e-mail to the address listed in the letter, and was referred to Crash Records Supervisor Nell Owens. Ms. Owens referred me to a website that required a log in (and of course DHSMV approval to do so). I learned after reading the user agreement the data could not be shared.

I replied to Ms. Owens with my concerns over the situation, and several highlighted portions of the public records laws of Florida. I also advised the response was unacceptable and that I would be filing a complaint with the Attorney General.

Within a couple of days Ms. Owens emailed me and apologized, advising the DHSMV would within a week or so make the crash data publicly accessible as it had been.

You can fight city hall- or the DHSMV. You simply have to stand your ground and know the law. I'm fortunate that the state trained me to be a good investigator and to dig for the truth. It's a shame I must now use these skills against the state and other local governments that have become corrupted by the red light camera scheme.

Paul Henry worked in law enforcement in Florida for over 25 years, starting as a deputy sheriff and retiring as a lieutenant with the FHP. He worked both traffic and investigations on the FHP. In his last 5 years he worked mainly license fraud, fugitives, ID theft, and commercial vehicle theft.

Why Tallahassee Reports?



The transformation of the media industry over the last thirty years has presented severe economic challenges to the newspaper industry.

The newspaper business, fueled by a near monopoly over local advertising for so long, has had to make drastic changes to the way they operate.

Without much, if any competition in reporting local news, many newspapers have been free to focus on their bottom line at the expense of

paying attention to their main mission - journalism. In other words, newspapers were faced with advertising competition, but not by news reporting competition.

I remember in the early 1990's when major state newspapers would send a gaggle of reporters to cover the decisions of the Florida Public Service Commission, which sets water and electric rates for much of the state.

That has since changed. As recently as five years ago, consumer advocates where begging reporters to cover conflict of interest issues at the Florida Public Service Commission.

Now we see major newspapers in the state of Florida not competing for a scoop, but collaborating to save money. The Miami Herald and Tampa Bay Times have developed a partnership "to help you find the truth in politics" and they share reports on each others blogs.

While these newspapers have been able to collaborate as a way to cut expenses, oth-

ers have had to make different decisions.

And that brings us to Tallahassee.

Our local newspaper, faced with the economic realities of the media business, has no one to collaborate with to cut expenses.

Instead, smaller media market newspapers, like our local paper, have had to go in a different direction. This direction includes cutting staff in the news room, charging for online access and catering to major advertisers.

In my view, these decisions have not been good for local news coverage.

Reduced local staff not only results in less reporting, but less investigating. Online pay walls mean more money to the Gannett Corporation, but less access for the citizens of Tallahassee. And catering to major advertisers, when your

major advertisers are local governments, can easily blur the line between journalistic integrity and the quest for the almighty dollar.

These changes have resulted in the deterioration of the mission of the local media - investigative reporting and holding local elected leaders accountable. It appears that the desire for corporate profits at the local newspaper have

I believe it's time for local news competition and that competition is Tallahassee Reports.

turned a blind eye to the true mission of journalism. I believe it is time for

local news competition and that competition is Tallahassee Reports.

Tallahassee Reports, which started over five years ago as an online blog, has been working to expand local news coverage by exploring partnerships with radio and local TV stations. These experiments have helped define

what works and have identified new opportunities.

Tallahassee Reports, the print edition, is the latest move to get more people informed about local government decisions and actions that would otherwise go unreported.

Thanks to concerned citizens and the cooperation of local news outlets, Tallahassee Reports has broke stories that have had a real impact on local government.

From deferred compensation, to the ADE story, to Honeywell and smart meters, and now the latest, the Brew Pub at Cascades Park, Tallahassee Reports has a track record of providing important information to the citizens of this community.

Now tens of thousands of Leon County citizens will have free access to a proven news source. Our goal is simple: provide investigative reports on local government issues and detailed analysis on the status of the local business climate to as many readers as possible.

Steve Stewart received his Masters degree in Political Science from FSU, and went on to work with the Office of Public Counsel. While at the Office of Public Counsel, Steve participated in major electric rate cases and provided testimony on behalf of the consumers of Florida before the Florida Public Service Commission. In 1999, he started a real estate marketing company, and since 2006 he has been the owner of a commercial marketing and printing business.

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Local Business Trends



Consumer Spending Analysis

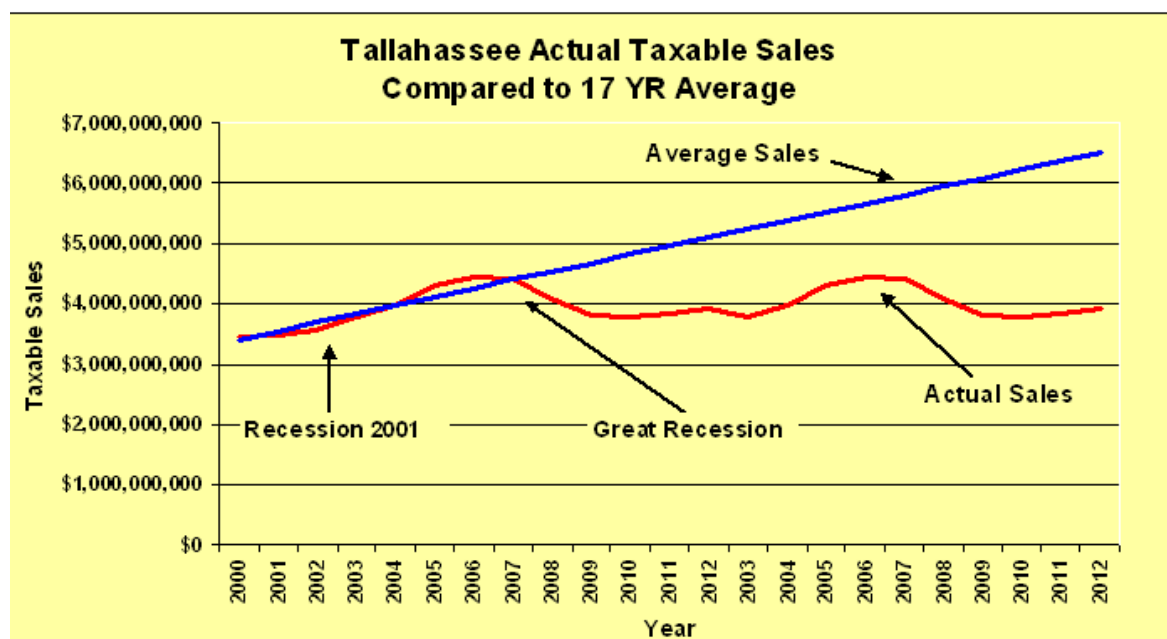
When a business sells taxable goods, they are required to submit monthly sales data to the Florida Department of Revenue. The state of Florida tracks this data for 22 different geographic areas across six different categories. The categories include Automobiles, Tourism, Durable goods, Non-Durable goods, Construction, and Business services. Taxable sales are an aggregate measure of economic activity which can reveal the health of a local economy.

One way of assessing the current performance of a local economy is by comparing the actual taxable sales to the trend of taxable sales over a specific period of time. The chart to the right uses average annual taxable sales for Tallahassee before the Great Recession (2007) to develop a trend line from 1990 through 2012 (The Average Sales line). The chart also shows actual taxable sales since 2000 (The Actual Sales line).

This graphic comparison shows the drastic impact the most recent recession has had on consumer spending in Tallahassee when compared to the trend over the last twenty years.

For example, look at the change in taxable sales during the 2001 recession and the corresponding recovery and compare that to the impact of the Great Recession. It is clear that the most recent recession has had and continues to have a dramatic effect on the local economy.

Under normal conditions (the Average Sales line), taxable sales would have been just over \$6 billion in 2012. However, the actual taxable sales in 2012, is just below \$4 billion.



While we have experienced a number of recessions over the last 40 years, the recovery from these recessions has never been much of a problem for the US economy. However, the magnitude and the nature of this most recent recession is characterized by a recovery that is slow in creating and sustaining jobs and wages.

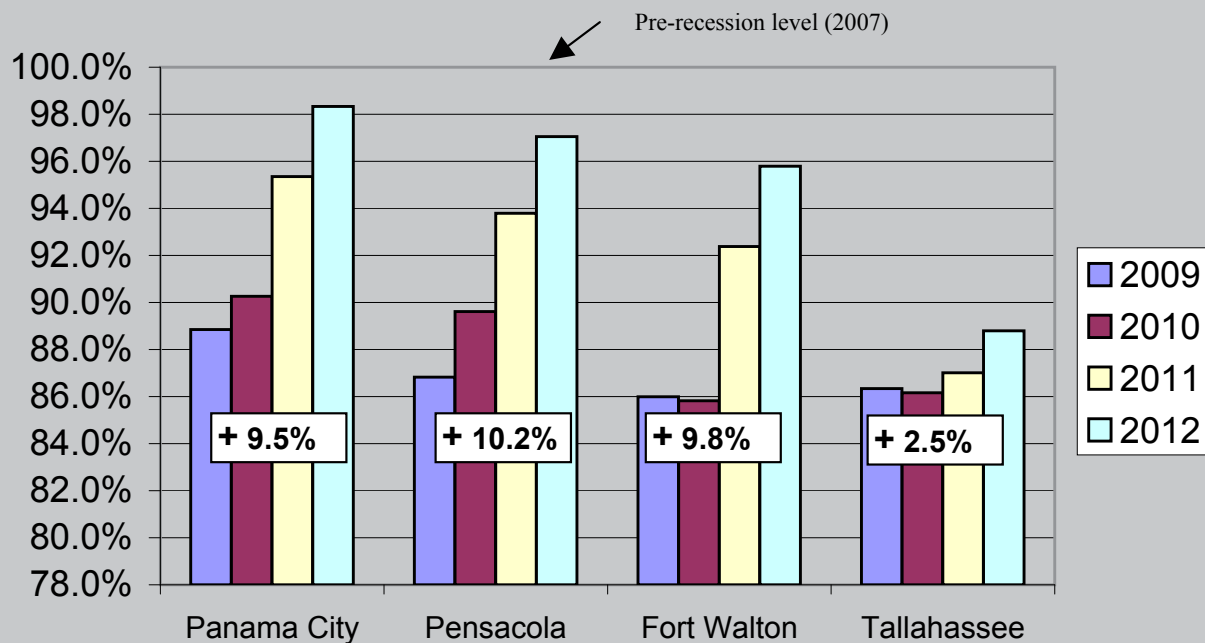
Consumer spending is a huge component of economic growth and job creation. Estimates indicate that consumer spending is responsible for 60% of

the employment in the US. So, how has consumer spending (taxable sales) in Tallahassee changed since the recession and how does that change compare to other cities in North Florida.

The chart below shows the taxable sales for four North Florida cities as percentage of pre-recession taxable sales for each year 2009 – 2012. A 100% or greater rating would indicate a city has surpassed pre-recession taxable sales.

Measuring the Recovery of Taxable Sales in North Florida.

Since the start of the recovery in 2009, taxable sales - a measure of consumer spending - has been climbing towards pre-recession levels (2007) in four North Florida cities. As the chart indicates, the rates of recovery range from 10.2% in Pensacola to 2.5% in Tallahassee from 2009-2012.



Source: State of Florida, Office of Economic and Demographic Research

Tallahassee Personal Income Up 2.5%, But Lagging Comparable Cities



For the first time since 2007, a recently released report by the United States Department of Commerce indicates that Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) has increased in all 366 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA). Personal income in the United States was up 5.2% in 2011 over 2010 for a PCPI of \$41,560.

A MSA is a government defined geographical region with a relatively high population density at its core and close economic ties throughout the area. A typical metropolitan area is centered around a single large city that wields substantial influence over the region.

Per capita income is often used as a measure of the wealth of the population of a geographic area, such as a city, county, state or nation.

The data for the Tallahassee MSA shows that PCPI increased 2.5% over 2010 levels to \$34,740. Tallahassee's gain was less than the 3.4% increase in Florida PCPI, which increased to \$39,636.

At the national level, the PCPI increased 4.0% from \$36,047 in 2010 to \$37,473 in 2011. This increase follows a 2.4% increase in 2010 and a recession induced 5.5% decrease in 2009.

The report released by the Bureau of Economic Analysis is a treasure trove of data that allows for comparisons across

states, counties and cities. The data provides a look into how communities are recovering from the devastating economic climate over the last six years.

Tallahassee Reports has put together a table that compares the per capita personal income from 2001 to 2011 in 16 Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the Southeast.

The table ranks the 16 selected MSA's from the highest to the lowest PCPI in 2011. For each MSA in 2001 and 2011, the PCPI, the US Rank and the Group Rank among the 16 Southeast MSA's is listed.

The last three columns show the change in US Rank from 2001 to 2011, if the MSA includes a state capital and/or a top 100 ranked university.

The biggest movers up the US rankings were Baton Rouge, LA, Columbus, GA, Panama City, FL and Pensacola, FL. For example, looking at the "US Rank Change" column, Baton Rouge's PCPI improved 85 spots from 217 in 2001 to 132 in 2011. Notably, only one of these cities was a home of a state capital or a top 100 university (Baton Rouge, LA).

The biggest movers down the US rankings were Raleigh, NC, Knoxville,

TN, Columbia SC, and Tallahassee, FL. Despite Raleigh, NC's big drop, they still remained in the top 100 in the United States. Of the four decliners, three were home to state capitals and top 100 universities.

Based on this data, one could easily conclude that during the last decade it was not beneficial to be the home of a state capital.

However, a closer look reveals that in 2001, all cities that were home to a state capital were in the top ten of the group rankings. In 2011, 4 state capital cities remained in the top 10, with Baton Rouge, LA being the biggest mover from number 10 in the "Group

Rank" 2001 to number 5 in 2011.

The two state capital cities with top 100 universities that fell from the top 10 were Columbia, SC and Tallahassee, FL.

The decline in PCPI was not insignificant. The failure to keep pace with personal income over the last decade has resulted in billions of dollars in lost income. For example, in 2011 if Tallahassee had the PCPI of Baton Rouge, LA, a city it was ahead of in 2001, the addi-

tional annual personal income would have been approximately \$1.5 billion.

Tallahassee Reports will continue to investigate why some cities with state capitals and top universities were able to maintain levels of personal income, and in the case of Baton Rouge improve its position, while Columbia, SC and Tallahassee, FL lost ground.

City(MSA)	Pop.	2001			2011			US Rank Change	State Capital	Top 100 University
		PCPI	US Rank	Group Rank	PCPI	US Rank	Group Rank			
Charlottesville, VA	203,882	\$31,893	69	3	\$44,350	47	1	22	N	Y
Richmond, VA	1,269,380	\$32,787	51	2	\$43,046	63	2	-12	Y	Y
Birmingham, AL	1,132,264	\$30,028	104	4	\$40,816	90	3	14	N	Y
Raleigh, NC	1,163,515	\$35,019	30	1	\$40,631	93	4	-63	N	Y
Baton Rouge, LA	808,242	\$25,928	217	10	\$38,985	132	5	85	Y	Y
Columbus, GA	301,439	\$25,808	222	11	\$38,653	138	6	84	N	N
Jackson, MS	545,394	\$27,170	175	7	\$37,544	161	7	14	Y	N
Panama City, FL	169,856	\$25,409	239	12	\$37,068	173	8	66	N	N
Knoxville, TN	704,500	\$28,220	145	5	\$36,958	177	9	-32	N	Y
Montgomery, AL	378,608	\$27,096	178	8	\$36,450	185	10	-7	Y	N
Pensacola, FL	453,218	\$24,865	267	15	\$36,079	194	11	73	N	N
Gainesville, FL	266,369	\$25,119	252	13	\$35,497	206	12	46	N	Y
Columbia, SC	777,116	\$27,874	150	6	\$35,350	212	13	-62	Y	Y
Tallahassee, FL	369,758	\$26,337	204	9	\$34,740	232	14	-28	Y	Y
Tuscaloosa, AL	221,553	\$24,523	287	16	\$34,305	248	15	39	N	Y
Lakeland, FL	609,492	\$24,898	266	14	\$33,447	267	16	-1	N	N

Sources: US Bureau of Economic Analysis

Local Business Trends

Leon County Employment Improves

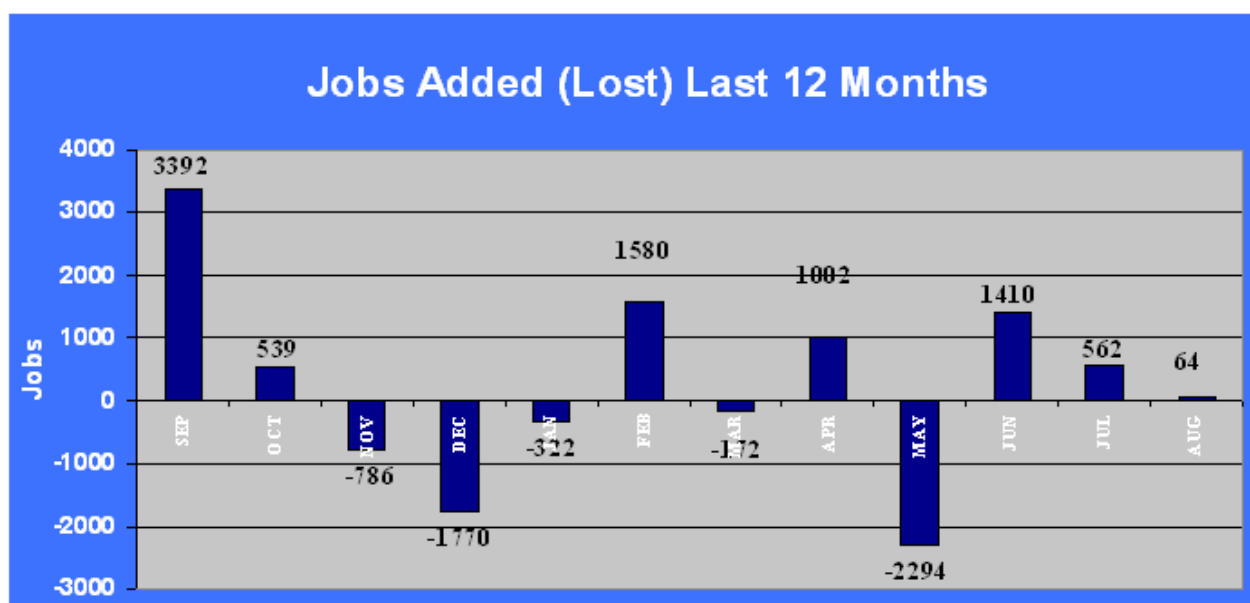
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In 2009 the number of workers in Tallahassee reached a post-recession low of 137,287. Leon County lost approximately 4,000 workers in 2008 and 2009. The loss of those workers over this period equates to the loss of over \$1 billion in annual income.

The chart also shows that our recovery since 2008 has been inconsistent. In fact, the number of workers increased in 2010 and held steady in 2011, but reached a new post-recession low in 2012, with 136,378 people working. This picture quickly changed in the beginning of 2013 with 138,312 people employed.

Based on the latest numbers, Leon County has recovered just over 1000 of the jobs lost during 2008 and 2009. This leaves Leon County some 3000 jobs below pre-recession levels.

However, August 2013 employment data show



an improving trend. The "Jobs Added" chart, to the right, shows that Leon County has added 3,205 jobs over the last 12 months, with just over 2,000 jobs coming in the last three months.

These trends indicate that 2013 provides the best

opportunity in five years for the local economy to create distance from the lingering effects of the Great Recession. But the "Jobs Added" chart offers a sobering reminder of how quick the employment picture can change in just one month.

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