

# **Commissioner Sue Gunzburger**

## *Broward County Commission, District 6*

### **New Budget Process Seeks To Minimize County Expenditures**

As Broward County begins the process of putting together a budget for 2008, an entirely new process is being used based on *Zero-Based* budgeting. Instead of assuming that all programs and services will continue, we are taking a fresh look at everything. Except for establishing a base millage rate (which could be adjusted), everything is on the table.

It's like taking a blank piece of paper, writing down the program or service you want to provide--justify its existence, prioritize it, and determine whether it fits in with one of the County Commission's adopted goals-- *economic opportunities, transportation, growth, the environment, affordable housing, the social safety net, cultural/recreational amenities and intergovernmental cooperation with other entities.*

Once the County Commission reaches consensus on a target millage rate (the current millage rate is 6.0661 mills—one mill is equal to \$1 per \$1,000 of taxable property value) staff will begin an analysis of the various programs under the direct control of the Commission. The performance of each program will be analyzed in relation to its impact on one or more of the Commission's adopted goals. The emphasis will be on performance measures, comparative analysis with other local governments (benchmarking), identifying cost savings and ranking of programs.

The end result of the analysis will reveal whether a program can be justified and/or whether the program is a high priority. The analysis will be focused on quantifiable data and how the program fits into departmental business plans in support of Commission goals.

Later on, we will meet with the County's Constitutional Officers (Sheriff, Elections Supervisor, Property Appraiser, Clerk of Court, State Attorney and Public Defender) and seek their cooperation in adhering to the Commission's target millage rate. Their cooperation is critical because more than half of the County's Commission's budget is spent by the Constitutional Officers (51 percent).

This spring, the Florida Legislature will be changing the way people are taxed. Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions. That is the reason the County Commission has decided to reduce taxes as much as possible without adversely impacting essential services and programs.

Broward County's current budget is approximately \$3.7 billion. Of that amount, \$2.5 billion is used for the operating budget (to annually support ongoing services and

programs), \$.8 billion for the capital budget (money put aside for construction and infrastructure projects and land acquisitions) and \$.4 billion for debt service (money used to repay voter-approved bond issues).

If you take a close look at your tax bill, you will see that your property is taxed by a number of other entities, including the cities, the Broward County School Board, hospital districts, water districts, etc. In total, more than eighty taxing authorities exist in Broward County with the authority to impose a tax on your property. Because tax bills are sent out and collected by the County's Revenue Collection Division, many residents think all of their taxes go to the County.

As we begin the process of putting together the 2008 budget, your input is critical to me and my colleagues. Our budget workshops will be advertised and public participation is strongly encouraged. Last year, public testimony moved the County Commission to reduce the budget by approximately \$20 million and decrease the millage rate by 10.6 percent. The millage rate decrease was the largest reduction in nearly a quarter of a century and represented the ninth year in a row that the tax rate had been reduced or remained the same.

As always, I am interested in your comments, concerns and suggestions. You can email me directly at [sgunzburger@broward.org](mailto:sgunzburger@broward.org) or contact my office at 954-357-7006.

Until next month,

**Commissioner Sue Gunzburger**  
***Broward County Commission, District 6***

April 2007