



# Ward 4 Newsletter

Volume 41, February 2012

## Lost Nation Municipal Golf Course:

The mild winter has allowed for record breaking rounds of golf and income for our City owned golf course. We are open for business, year round and the new driving range is extremely popular. Lots of improvements to the course over the last couple years so check us out!



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## **FISCAL TASK FORCE UPDATE**

The City has executed on a number of task force recommendations and realized significant cost savings:

1. Cost savings of \$400,000 based on reduced positions and changes to the plan, including new deductibles and co-pays.
2. Elimination of Health Insurance for Council, savings of \$112,000
3. Reduction in overtime by combining service and parks labor pool. \$75,000 in savings
4. Elimination of Fourth Platoon for Police with attrition and retirements. Savings of \$300,000
5. Reduced administrative staff by changing Mayor Secretary and Council Clerk to part time positions. Savings of \$100,000
6. Combine or reduce a number of other positions with savings of \$200,000

In total these actions are providing over \$1,000,000 in annual savings to the City. These steps, along with budget discipline, relatively stable income tax and a bump in Inheritance tax allowed us to end 2011 in a better than expected financial position. Our fund balance remained about the same while projections a year ago forecasted a sizeable negative year in 2011.

That is the good news. Bad news is that the State is fixing their budget problems by putting the burden on local communities and we are facing significant (over \$1,000,000) annual reductions from the State Shared Fund portion of our income. Add to that, the recent news that our County Commissioners want to reduce the local apportionments going to communities and we will face many large financial challenges. Additionally, the State inheritance tax is going away in 2013, so this is likely the last year we will see any income, which has averaged about \$800,000 annually over the last decade. Add these numbers up and you see we have taken aggressive actions to save \$1M while facing reductions of about \$2M.

## **TRASH COLLECTION**

One of the other recommendations from the Task Force was to review City services, like trash collection. We wanted first to address and take action on steps to save money and have begun discussions about trash collection. It is highly likely that we will be ending the practice of providing this as a City service and will move, like majority of other communities, the trash collection to a resident paid service. Based on discussions, I would expect the City to negotiate a City wide contract that would maintain the same level of service with the addition of curbside recycling, which so many of you have been requesting. Initial indications are that the cost would be \$15-\$20 monthly, paid for by individual residents.

## **SAFETY**

Local crime in our immediate area appears to be up and I urge all of you to make sure to lock your doors and cars. The most recent problem is to break out windows in cars at health clubs. Make sure to take valuables (purses) with you or lock in your trunk - out of sight! This is a problem all over but we do have a couple health clubs in our immediate vicinity so please be careful and watch for suspicious activity. As we head to spring (where is Winter, by the way), we typically have more activity with valuables being taken from cars. More often than not, these are from cars with open doors so the best and easiest way to protect your valuables is to make sure you lock doors and keep valuables out of view.

In addition to crime, scams are very much on the uprise. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Nigerian money that can be transferred to your account? NO! It may sound silly, but the stuff that sounds craziest, is used over and over because it works and people fall for it all the time. Internet crime is not something our police on the street can do much about and is the hardest to impact on a local basis.