



From the Desk of Andrew D. Gillum
City Commission, Seat 2



∞ The Village Square ∞

[The Village Square](#) is a non-partisan, public educational forum for matters of local, state and national importance. It strives to maintain factual accuracy in civic and political debate by providing a platform for civil dialog on divisive issues. The Village Square is also dedicated to recalling the history and principles at the foundation of our democracy. Liz Joyner, Executive Director, stresses that part of the mission is finding a way to walk *toward* each other to find similarities.

The March 23, 2010 Village Square forum, “Taxation and Tea Parties,” focused on real life issues about government spending and on the ways that taxation impacts the price of living in a civilized society. It featured a variety of ideological perspectives from liberal to conservative and everything in-between. Dr. Carol Weissert (*LeRoy Collins Institute*), Bob McClure (*James Madison Institute*), and Dominic Calabro (*Florida TaxWatch*) joined me for a lively panel discussion moderated by Neil Skene (*Village Square Board Member, Special Counsel at the Florida Department for Children and Families*).

Hot on the burner that evening was the landmark signing of health insurance reform legislation.

This issue has deeply divided people in our country. Although some TV broadcasts have profiled the worst of the American spirit, some parts of this debate have brought out the best of the American people.

As we argue the merits or the particulars of this law, we should do so understanding that many proponents of healthcare do not see this as simply a debate over dollars and cents. However, this debate is of a higher moral/humane calling. Judeo-Christian values clearly tell us that we are judged by, “how we treat the least among us.”

The argument about healthcare goes directly to the heart of who we are as a nation. Many of us advocate healthcare because of our belief in the “greater good of all humanity.” However, we do not always publicly trace that strong set of principles to its grounding in our faith. The Bible and other doctrines of belief may not specifically outline any particular policy on medical care; however, it is often made clear that protecting the health of human beings is a profoundly important personal and communal responsibility for people of faith.

The economic incentives for change are also real and compelling. At the national level, our current system of healthcare is inefficient and costly. We must place more emphasis on prevention and primary care. Too many Americans use the local emergency room as their primary system of health delivery. Those costs are passed along to individuals who have health insurance. Likewise, employers have to adjust year-to-year because of unpredictable increases in health premiums.

At the City’s February 10, 2010 Financial Viability in Government Target Issue Committee meeting, Capital Health Plan (CHP) representatives provided statistics and information regarding the City’s insurance trends and claims data. Below are some of the major points presented, which directly affect the City’s future rates.

- Average age of participants in the plan went from 32.9 in 2003 to 35.1 in 2008
- High percent of retirees in the plan
- High incidences of chronic, high cost illnesses
- High illness burden compared to CHP’s commercial membership base
- Average rate increase since 2005 is 4.6% vs. the national average of 8.7%

It has been projected that 30% of healthcare spending could be eliminated through more efficient and effective service delivery. Those savings can equate to more and/or improved municipal services to meet the demands of our

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(Continued next column.)

☞ Hope for HOPE ☞

[HOPE Community](#), operated by the [Big Bend Homeless Coalition](#), is a transitional housing facility that serves the needs of the homeless with separate accommodations for men, women and families. They provide extensive case-management, permanent housing placement services, and job counseling for their residents. The facilities include a cafeteria and a new healthcare program, targeting the homeless population. HOPE Community has the physical capacity to serve 160 clients at a given time; however, the enrollment capacity has been limited to 100 residents due to insufficient staffing.

In response to HOPE Community's "Proposal for Funding", which sought for a first year commitment of \$100,000, the Beatitude Foundation offered to provide 30% of their requested funding if the City would provide the balance of 70%. The Foundation offered to provide funding to cover the expansion of operations for a five-year period predicated on a commitment from the City for that same period. At its March 17, 2010 meeting, the Health and Human Services Target Issue Committee approved allocating \$70,000 of Community Development Block Grant funds each year for the five-year period. The resulting benefit will increase available shelter and supportive services to help end homelessness in our community.



Change is inevitable. The best way to handle it is to manage it rather than resist it. Our community is growing and we must adjust our *modus operandi* to make change work for us and not against us.

In an effort to improve transit in our community, the nova2010 Decentralization Plan seeks to convert our current hub-and-spoke model of bus transit to a multi-point, multi-transfer system with direct routes to many destinations. Other benefits proposed include increase in service frequency and decrease in travel time. At our [March 24, 2010 City Commission meeting \(see agenda](#)

citizens.

☞ StarMetro Wi-Fi ☞

Excerpt from *StarMetro Wi-Fi White Paper* printed by permission.

In March 2008, StarMetro added wireless internet access to ten of its buses. This Wi-Fi capability allows customers easy access to the Internet via their laptop or phone while riding the bus. StarMetro's wireless provider is the Parvus Corporation, who installed a technology called RiderNet³ ("RiderNet cubed"), their third generation Wi-Fi application for mass transit. The connection uses a high-speed cellular link and a roof-mounted shark-fin antenna to provide coverage even in areas with very weak cellular service. This technology allows StarMetro and Parvus to remotely monitor the status of all connections to ensure they are operating properly, as well as a filter to limit the exposure to potentially offensive content on the network.

The [buses with free Wi-Fi](#) ☞☞ are identified by an exterior Wi-Fi logo near the bus entrance doors and by car cards inside the bus, which also provide Wi-Fi log-in instructions. Recently, StarMetro spread the existing Wi-Fi buses throughout the system to eliminate the labeling of "Wi-Fi routes." The Wi-Fi buses now rotate throughout the system, which allows for equitable use of this new amenity.

In the long term, as funding permits, StarMetro plans to expand Wi-Fi coverage to the entire bus fleet. Consistent presence of Wi-Fi throughout StarMetro could prove to be a significant incentive in maintaining current riders and attracting new, choice riders, as the ability to access the Internet is an advantage not available in cars.

Google™ Broadband Project

Google, Inc. announced that it will build ultra high-speed broadband networks in one or more trial locations in the United States. These high-speed networks will provide data at 1 Gigabit per second, which is 100 times faster than most broadband networks. This speed will allow users to access advanced applications that require high-speed networks. At our [March 10, 2010 City Commission meeting \(see agenda item #16\)](#), we authorized City staff to submit an application for

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item #20), we approved this plan, which is to be launched the latter part of 2010 or early 2011.

🌀 The City Gets Social “Online” 🌀

Excerpts from *The Pager*, printed by permission from Lizzy Kelly, Public Information Specialist, City of Tallahassee.

What is social media? Simply put, social media are online locations (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc.) where people have conversations. Social media is not a fad; it’s a fundamental shift in the way we communicate, which requires a shift in our thinking as well as methods of operation. The nature of social media makes it hard to stay “on message” and control what is said. It does, however, present a golden opportunity to present the City’s stance and engage and encourage citizens to have an open, honest dialogue.

To help foster more civic engagement and create an ongoing dialogue between the City organization and the citizens we serve, the City is delving into social media. Several projects and departments have already established a social media presence as beta testers. A few examples include Twitter alerts for all City news releases and for traffic road closures, and Facebook pages. To see a full listing of information currently available from the City on social media, visit Talgov.com/communications/socialmedia.cfm.

Delving into social media might be little scary. But, as Rick Cole wrote in his article “Social Media: What Does It Mean for Public Managers? It’s risky to be a pioneer, but in a rapidly changing world, it’s even riskier to be left behind. Understanding what business we are in today is vital—it drives the choices we make and the tools we use.” “We want to meet the needs of the citizens in our community, and we believe that social media can help us get information into their hands in a timely and convenient way,” said Michelle Bono, Assistant to the City Manager. It is in this spirit that the City moves into social media.

For Your Awareness

Since the City network is given for business purposes only, the use of social media is blocked on the City network for security and productivity reasons. Additionally, in compliance with Florida’s Sunshine Laws, anything posted by the City on its social media sites is considered public record.

consideration and confirmed Commissioner Gil Ziffer as the Commission liaison to promote this initiative.

🌀 Be My “Friend” 🌀

Technology helps us connect to the outside world. Typical to the character of the “X” Generation, I am an advocate and active user of technology tools such as Twitter, Skype, MapQuest, blogging, web cam, smart phones, e-readers, digital media, and web shopping via Ebay, Craigslist, etc. These technological programs offer quick access to a wealth of information and they help me stay “in-touch” with “friends”. A “friend” is someone you have granted access to your social media networking circle.

Frequently, invitations from Facebook and LinkedIn to become someone’s “friend” come to my City e-mail address. As mentioned in [“The City Gets Social ‘Online’”](#) article, the City’s network system has a block on employees’ access to the social media sites. Thus, I am unable to respond from my City e-mail address to a sender’s social media address, even if it is a “friend” invitation or comment related to City business. In like manner, due to limited access to City resources, I prefer that invitations or inquiries related to my role as a City Commissioner be directed to my City e-mail address (andrew.gillum@talgov.com) rather than through any of my social networking sites. Otherwise, invite me to be your social networking “friend” because I like to stay in-touch. My Facebook fan page can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

🌀 April Calendar Events 🌀

“Subject to Change”

Date	Time	Events
4/5	6 pm	PMYC YAB
4/14	9 am – 10:30 am	FVIG Target Issue
4/14	10:30 am – 4 pm	Office Appointments
4/14	4 pm	CC Meeting @ CH
4/19	9 am – 1 pm	CRTPA Retreat
4/24	Noon – 8 pm	Earth Day Jam
4/26	7 pm	TEAM Action Assembly
4/28	9 am – 2 pm	Office Appointments
4/28	2 pm – 3 pm	Go Beyond Foundation
4/28	3 pm – 4 pm	CRA
4/28	4 pm	CC Meeting @ CH

Code (All meeting at City Hall unless otherwise noted)

CC – City Commission CRA – Community Redevelopment Agency
CRTPA – Capital Regional Transportation Planning Agency

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