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In this Edition

- FH Pride*1
- Real Work*.....1
- The Budget*2
- Believing*2
- Advertisements*....2

From the Editor

Forest Heights Pride



Councilman Myles Spires - Editor

To say that I am proud of Forest Heights is an understatement. On May 11, a record number of voters turned out to vote in this town. This was the largest turnout in Forest Heights history. The winds of change were swirling about and our residents did not leave it to chance or their neighbors to make the decision for them.

As you already know, residents across Forest Heights wanted change. Probably so disenchanted with the past administration, Ward I voters,

who were thought not to have any political clout, decidedly ousted Lynn Smith-Barnes and elected long time resident and community activist Alice Hoskins. Ward II went for activism as well in electing me over a long time resident selected to run by the past administration. Ward III was so ready for change from the past administration that "Donald Duck" was a write in against the unopposed Worthington Ross. Of course the Beck victory was a mandate. The people chose someone who went against the grain of the former regime



Senator Gloria Lawlab swearing in Mayor Joyce Beck as Councilman Worthington Ross looks on.

and has been a very strong voice for openness in government.

Still my pride comes from seeing a community that will not allow themselves to be taken lightly. Our community sent a clear message that leaders are accountable to the public and that we want action - not words.

Let's stay involved in the process. Come out to the town meetings, work sessions, and hearings. It's a matter of pride.



Council members Spires and Hoskins

Beck Triumphant in Election – The Real Work Begins

While Mayor Joyce Beck's mandate victory was handily accomplished on May 11, the work of making good on campaign promises is another battle altogether. Beck, who decisively won the role of Mayor of Forest Heights has hit the decks running trying to sort out the financial affairs of the town and settle the Spires lawsuit as promised. However, keeping campaign promises is not always as easy as our leaders would like for it to be.

Already, Beck has moved to reorganize how the town is run by gaining the council's approval of Michael "Airborne" Eubanks as Chief of Police. Eubanks has been the Acting Chief for some months now and has already initiated a door to door campaign to involve parents of youth in Forest Heights to help control vagrancy and to involve residents in general in stemming the rising crime wave typical of summer months. Beck has also appointed veteran lawyer William Ticer as the new town attorney, made new committee assignments which include residents, and provided open budget information for residents' input in the upcoming public budget hearing.



Mayor Joyce Beck - Swearing in ceremony

Although the new mayor and senior members of the council are encountering the expected challenges in transitioning from one administration to the next, Beck has been able to hammer out a rough settlement of the Spires lawsuit as she promised in her campaign. As well, Councilman Atkinson has been very vocal in putting aside the ugliness left over from the last administration and has extended his hand to help bridge the gap.

Beck has been very candid in stating that there is still a lot of work to be done in straightening out the town's business. The budget and tax situations seem to be the big ticket items in the balance now. These first thirty days have been non-stop with no slowdown in sight. Welcome to the Mayor's Office Ms. Beck!

THE COALITION OF CONCERNED CITIZENS'

Forest Heights Herald Examiner

The Budget - It's Your Money - Follow It!

by Ricardo Sears

To explain that notice in laymen's terms is simple. The County, not the Town Council, is adding more taxes to our tax bills.

If the Mayor and Town Council vote to decrease the real property tax rate to \$0.451, then the town will lose money and services. If they vote to keep our tax rate the same... we get to keep services.

The budget process can be a grueling and even downright frustrating process. Unfortunately, most of the residents in Forest Heights do not participate in the budget process. The truth is, this is how the town found itself in the fiscal mess that it was in during the previous administration. So now that the town has spoken through the election process, it is a good time for residents to get involved with the budget process because it's your money.

Consider this: each year the town's officials pass a budget. Basically, the budget is a spending plan that is to be followed throughout the year. So if the budget says \$10 goes to candy, then \$10 must go to candy; otherwise, the money is not accounted for; this is called misappropriation of funds and covers outright theft, mismanagement of funds and/or misspending.

Mayor Joyce Beck has revealed several areas of concern with the finances of our town. She has already identified areas where the former administration apparently misappropriated more than one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) and is working to recover those funds to save the town's solvency. Several council members have expressed shock over the condition of town's affairs. All of the town's officials are hopeful that correcting the financial affairs of the town can be done

quickly and without the intervention of the court in filing civil or criminal actions.

However, to understand where we are going, we must understand where we have been. So, what do we know so far?

1. We know that the former administration possibly mismanaged funds to be utilized in the retrofitting of the Town Hall to be American With Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. That was to the tune of \$80,000.00. The Mayor is working feverishly to prevent the town from having to eat the cost.
2. We know that the former Mayor and Town Administrator spent town's resources to have the then town attorney perform extensive background investigations on citizen[s] who did not support their position. The former town attorney was paid

nearly \$10,000.00 and possibly more to provide his services to the Town.

3. We know that the town paid a lobbyist \$12,000.00 last year. This money was never in the budget.

So what about the taxes. A notice went out that there will be a public hearing on the taxes on June 17, 2005.

To explain that notice in laymen's terms is simple. The County, not the Town Council, is adding more taxes to our tax bills. If the Mayor and Town Council vote to decrease the real property tax rate to \$0.451, then the town will lose money and services. If they vote to keep our tax rate the same, our taxes will increase by 4.3% or an average of \$1.87 per month/per household but we get to keep services.

Public Hearing
June 17, 2005
8:00 pm
 Forest Heights Municipal Center
 5508 Arapahoe Drive
 Forest Heights, Maryland 20745
 301-839-1030

This hearing is about your money! You need to be there! An involved community is the key to a better community.

Believing in Forest Heights Youth

by Charlene Terry

Summer is upon us and our children are out of school. Fortunately, our town is responding in a positive way to help ease the load of providing activities for our youth.

Already, the town has established a youth council which meets every Thursday at 6:30 pm at the town hall. In fact, the Mayor and Town Council are so committed to honoring our youth, that on June 10,

the Town provided 50 youth from the town with a trip to Kings Dominion. Other trips are being scheduled for the youth throughout the summer so don't let them miss out.

In a recent speech, Mayor Joyce Beck



Mayor Joyce Beck - Forest Heights Elementary

addressed the graduating youth from Forest Heights Elementary by saying that she believed in them. Well, the town's investment in the youth is

proof positive that we believe in them as well.