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The Chamber Alliance of Lake County is a non-profit organization advocating on behalf of the Chambers of Lake County and their 3,500 Chamber members.

The Chamber Alliance is comprised of the East Lake, Leesburg Area, Tavares, Lake Eustis, Mount Dora, Lady Lake, South Lake and Umatilla Chambers.

For additional information on the Chamber Alliance, contact your local participating Chamber of Commerce or go to the Alliance website : www.lakecountychamberalliance.com.

Court Decisions Impact Businesses

While the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission approved a proposal to be placed on the November ballot that would reduce property taxes by as much as 37%, the Florida Supreme Court found the ballot language misleading. The Court felt that the ballot language would lead voters to believe that the Legislature was obligated to always replace lost property tax revenues for schools with alternative funding. However, the actual constitutional amendment only required the legislature to find replacement funding for one year.



Proponents of the ballot measure believe that too much of government is being funded through property taxes and that during the real estate boom, governments were taking in extra tax funds without consideration of whether taxes should be reduced. Opponents of the measure point to the volatility of sales tax and its regressive impact on lower income households that will be adversely impacted by sales tax increases. Additionally, some retail businesses express concerns about the impact increasing sales tax would have in a sluggish economy.

While reducing property taxes has been supported in Lake County business surveys over the last several years, the impact of raising sales taxes in the County has not been studied. The Chamber Alliance will be soliciting input from its members and from experts over the next several months before taking a formal position on this important constitutional amendment which for the time being has been delayed.

In June, Hometown Democracy organizers filed a lawsuit in federal court which would have overturned a February 1st petition deadline for citizen initiatives. US District Judge Stephen Mickle concluded there was no justification to overturn state constitutional requirements in order to put their amendment on the November, 2008 ballot.

Hometown Democracy is the name given to a Florida Constitutional ballot initiative that would require that all land use changes in Florida be approved by citizen referendum. The ballot initiative fell 65,182 signatures short of the 611,009 needed to make the ballot.

Business Community Prepares for Hurricane Season and Beyond

It's the time of year when we all watch the weather reports a little closer for potential hurricanes. Most of us think about what we need to do at our homes to prepare for a hurricane, but have you thought about your business? Thanks to Lake Sumter Community College and the University of Central Florida, several businesses participated in a workshop designed to help them better prepare their business for a disaster. If you missed this workshop, no worries there are great resources available at www.ready.gov to help business prepare for disasters.

Whether natural or man-made, at least one in four businesses affected by a disaster never reopens. Though emergencies are unpredictable, when you have a plan in place you can adapt, recover and stay in control.

The Chamber Alliance is actively working with Lake County Emergency Management to help develop response plans for disasters that impact local businesses. Additionally, the Chamber Alliance and the Emergency Management staff are visiting with other area



emergency management organizations in the state in order to prepare the best business development plans. The Chamber Alliance would like to thank Lake County Emergency Management Director Jerry Smith for his commitment to ensuring that Lake County is ready to help area businesses and residents when a disaster occurs.

Chambers and Businesses weigh in on Landscape Ordinance

Lake County recently proposed a major overhaul of its landscaping requirements for new development in a 45 page ordinance revising the County's Land Development Regulations. In a letter to the County Manager, the Chamber Alliance acknowledged that a revision to the landscape ordinance was needed as the current requirements were out of step with requirements generally required by the municipalities in Lake County. However, there were several areas of concern in the draft ordinance that the Chamber Alliance felt needed to be addressed

prior to adoption. A couple of the major issues include:

The ordinance required that if a building was expanded by 1,000 square feet, the existing landscaping would have to be brought up to current code requirements. While 1,000 square feet would be an appropriate criteria for residential uses, it would not be for large commercial and industrial sites.

While the ordinance appropriately requires landscape

buffers between commercial and residential uses, it requires this same buffer when commercial land uses are along major roadways (such as State Road 441, Hwy 50 and U. S. 27) and the residential developments are across the major roadway.

The ordinance significantly increased the number of trees required in some of the buffers. However, according to certified arborists the number of trees proposed in the buffers exceed what is appropriate for the growth pattern of

the trees.

"We are certain that our concerns with the ordinance can be addressed during the adoption process," states Chamber Alliance President, Ron Wallace.

On September 16th, the County Commission conducted a public workshop where they received considerable input on the ordinance. The Chamber Alliance will continue to monitor the development of this new ordinance.



Chamber Alliance—Brief Notes

Alliance Prepares for 2009 Trip to Tallahassee



In the wake of the various efforts to lower property taxes and the downturn of the economy, the 2009 legislative session will be more about jump starting the economy, finding ways to cut government costs, and reducing regulations that hinder existing businesses. It will be a great year for businesses to attend and help ensure that these efforts are successful.

The 2009 Lake County Day event is currently scheduled for February 10-11, 2009. These dates are tentative until the legislative schedule is released in November. Registration for Lake County Days will start in December, so watch your email for additional information.

Alliance Sponsors High School Essay Contest

The Chamber Alliance of Lake County, in an effort to help develop leaders among Lake County's youth, has developed a 500 word essay contest in concert with the Lake County School System, Lake Sumter Community College and Leadership Lake County. This fall, high school students may choose to write an answer to either of the following subjects:

- There appears to be apathy among youth today as to political involvement. If given the opportunity, what would you do to change it?
- Should politicians be held to a higher ethical standard than you and I?



Winners of the essay contest will each receive a trip to Tallahassee as part of the Lake County Day Event in February 2009. Winning students will attend meetings with local legislators during this two day event, along with tours of the Capitol and the Supreme Court. Meals, transportation and accommodations are covered for each winner and their chaperone. Also, winning essays will be published in the Daily Commercial newspaper. Information concerning the essay contest will be distributed to Lake County schools in October.

Annual Business Survey

In October, the Chamber Alliance will distribute its annual business survey to each chamber member via email. Your input will help establish the agenda of the Chamber Alliance for 2009. "The annual business survey helps us ensure that the Chamber Alliance activities remain focused on the current needs of the business community," states Ron Wallace, current President of the Alliance. So when you receive the email notice, please take five minutes to complete the survey.

Economic Development Takes Center Stage in Lake County

County Creates New Advisory Council

Collaborating with the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission, Lake County is recruiting individuals for a 14-member advisory council. The council will include representatives from local municipalities, chambers of commerce, educational facilities and target industries. Various sub-committees will support the council as it acts to assist Lake County with implementation of the strategic plan while addressing issues regarding economic development infrastructure, industry cluster development, and marketing and communications.



At the same time, Lake County is strengthening its relationship with the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission. The EDC is currently reviewing applications for a staff person who will act as the marketing expert and liaison for Lake County.

Clean-tech Grows in Lake County

Lake County is home to many clean-tech businesses, and more are being attracted with Lake County's continued commitment to green industries. In Groveland, three biodiesel plants are gearing up for business. According to the Aug. 15 edition of the Orlando Business Journal, "Together, the three Groveland plants, CleanFuel LLC, Southern Energy Holdings Inc. and Summit Biodiesel — represent a significant investment in the area: Southern Energy estimates its operation costs at \$5 million — and the three firms could create up to 100 jobs, paying a minimum of \$15 an hour."

Lake County encourages green businesses through a variety of activities. On Nov. 1, 2008, Lake County is showcasing some of the innovative and environmentally friendly industries at the first-ever Lake County Green Fair at Wootton Park in downtown Tavares. The one-day fair from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. provides a place for exhibitors to promote sustainable products and services to an audience that is interested in leading a greener lifestyle.