

Another season—and all that it entails—at the Port of Edmonds

By Bob McChesney, Executive Director, the Port of Edmonds

While the physical world that we can touch and see changes with the time of year, so too does the cycle of administration at the Port of Edmonds. It's summertime. That means the marina is busy with boating traffic and visitors and plants in full bloom along the waterfront. It means fishing and cruising and kites and kids—the voice of fun.

It also means it is time to start thinking about the budget. Sort of a boring aria to a summertime opera of much anticipated activities to celebrate the season of the sun, but a necessary element to frame our future in the year ahead. It must be done.

The Port's budget for 2011 will not be less stringent than before. Indeed, if anything the constraints appear to be more compelling. We operate in an economic circumstance that creates immense pressures on the services and facilities provided by the Port of Edmonds.

Our customers, and the taxpayers who own the Port, expect much: a first class marina, award winning public access and the best service. With that also comes a business imperative to operate as efficiently as possible. A primary method for measuring cost efficiency is the budget.

The Port has a very limited revenue stream. About 52% of revenue is generated by marina moorage and dry stack operations. Another 15% is from other marina related cost centers such as the workyard, and the public launch. Real estate contributes 28% to gross annual revenue. About 5% is from taxpayers.

Meanwhile, every cost category has gone up. Environmental costs alone have increased an average 19% a year over the past ten years. Fuel, tools, equipment and materials required for maintenance and operations have increased. Deferral can be a dangerous strategy. It catches up.

Consequently, as in previous years doing more with less seems to be the recurring theme.

That's business.

Transparency is a policy directive that expresses full accountability as a core value at the Port.

There is no better way to discover those important governance factors than to participate in the budget process.

Starting August there will be three Commission workshops to discuss the operating and capital budgets for 2011. These will be followed by three public hearings to review budget assumptions, revenue forecasts and other operating and strategic issues. The budget will be completed and approved by the Port Commission by November 8, 2010.

It's important to remember what the budget is, and what it isn't. It's a framework for discussing Port operations. It's a forecast and a prediction for the coming year. It's a tool for measuring progress. And it's a key process for public participation.

The Port's budget isn't just something we make up on the fly. Start to finish it takes almost three months of Staff and Commission working together. Fundamentally, the Port's budget relies on public involvement. At the Port, it makes our summer all the more meaningful than it otherwise might be.

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