



# NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

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## **Despite recession, Beaufort shows strong financial strength with reorganizations**

Facing less money to do more work, Beaufort's government responded with innovative ways to improve and increase services while decreasing operating costs by \$750,000.

Due to their out of the box approaches, the City was also able to pay down substantial debt, complete a major storm water project without taking on new debt, and end the fiscal year in better financial shape than at the beginning of the year.

In his summary of the 2009-2010 Beaufort finances prepared for the Beaufort City Council, Mack Cook, the city's finance director, saluted City Council and staff efforts to bring better service to residents with little extra funding.

"The City's financial position continues to improve, which is nothing short of amazing considering the national recession," Cook said.

"The City reduced its debt by \$2.2 million, including retiring several years early \$675,000 in outstanding loans, which saves taxpayers a lot of debt service payments in future years," he said. "We are doing more with less, and we continue to work toward our goal of exceptional service."

Among the encouraging signs: Building permits are up in 2010 compared to 2009, due in large part to better enforcement of permits for renovation work. Business license fees are stable – which is better than seeing them decrease, City Manager Scott Dadson noted.

Total "governmental and business-type expenses" decreased \$973,664, according to Cook's report. Government expenses decreased \$502,561 due to decreased personnel costs.

Expenses associated with business-type activities (Solid Waste) decreased \$438,488 after the privatization of the City Solid Waste and Recycling operations, Cook said.

Much of what the City has been able to accomplish this past year started with the outsourcing of the residential solid waste and recycling to Waste Pro, he said. For Fiscal Year 2010, which ended June 30, the City's Solid Waste operation netted \$103,000 in positive cash flow.

That improvement comes even after the Solid Waste Fund repaid \$178,000 in outstanding equipment loans and \$55,000 in advances from the General fund. This compares to a loss in FY 2009 from Solid Waste operations of \$77,000, Cook said.

"Improving the Solid Waste fund position let the City redirect money to enhance the appearance of our neighborhood, sidewalks, curbs and streets while building a reserve for the replacement of the roll carts and recycling bins," Cook said.

Expanded services – made possible partly by outsourcing work to the private sector -- include those increased efforts to clean up the city and to maintain parks and open space. Also, the City brought in outside experts to review police and fire department practices.

Over the past year, City staff, residents and volunteers collected more than 350 tons of debris from across the City, creating a more attractive community while also improving fire safety by removing all that flammable material, Dadson said.

The clean-up was possible through the dedication of several Neighborhood Associations, residents and volunteers, City staff and the efforts of Waste Pro, the company that provides garbage, trash and recycling collection.

Pro-active, prevention-based efforts by the Beaufort Fire Department and Beaufort Police Department earned "best practice" kudos from a recent comprehensive study conducted in 2009-2010 by the International City/County Management Association for Beaufort.

Earlier this month, Beaufort Fire Chief Sammy Negron and Dadson shared plans to add to the fleet smaller, more versatile, maneuverable and efficient vehicles. The smaller trucks will bring firefighting capabilities but also will better serve the 66 percent of fire calls that actually involve medical emergencies and not fires, Dadson said.

Comprehensive, prevention-based efforts by the Beaufort police and fire departments help save lives and reduce loss of property, ICMA experts said. The reports addressed strengths of both departments as well as areas where improvement is needed.

"We brought ICMA and their experts in to take a close look at the services we provide in public safety, and to help us identify how we can make an already good thing better," Dadson said. "The reports indicate we've made good progress but still have room to improve, and we now have a new roadmap for that improvement."

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