

# HEALTH CARE, BUDGETS, OH MY

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*Thursday, October 16, 2008*



## Health Care, Budgets, Oh My

Last Tuesday, October 7th, the options for the 2009 benefits packages were presented in a meeting held in the BOCC meeting room. Kathy Lancaster, the Human Resources officer for the county, invited the candidates for Board of County Commissioners, department heads and elected officials. There were no representatives from the hourly staff in attendance. The meeting was not published, nor was there an agenda, therefore only Commissioner Goetz attended.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the meeting due to work obligations. I was provided a copy of the packages for review, and a summary of the meeting from Robert Thomasson.

On Wednesday, October 15th, Ms. Lancaster presented the Board of County Commissioners with a benefits package for their approval. There was no mention of a public discussion of the pros and cons of the benefits packages, nor any detail provided on record regarding the decision making process.

Immediately after the benefits approval, the BOCC provided those attending the meeting a copy of the preliminary budget for the county. A date of 12/10 was proposed for the public hearing on the 2009 budget. At that time, I requested the opportunity to ask a question, and was provided that opportunity.

Here is a summary of my questions and statements: Will there be any public meetings between now and 12/10 regarding the development of the 2009 budget? There are a number of residents who have expressed an interest in participating in the budget development who bring talent, skill and background to the table.

Were there any public hearings on the benefits package that may have taken place between 10/7 and 10/15? It is apparent a decision was made by the BOCC prior to the meeting, and I would like to know how that occurred.

I also stated that I did not expect the BOCC to answer my questions {as the current BOCC has made it abundantly clear they do not answer questions}.

It is frustrating to recognize that we have qualified folks who are very interested in seeing wise government, a good benefit package for the cost to the county and the employees, and a smart, lean budget for 2009. These folks are from all parties and political ideologies. Many are staunch, conservative Republicans who are not being provided an opportunity to participate in the local government they and we are paying for.

I encourage the BOCC to immediately schedule and publish study sessions that further develop the 2009 Budget. Define what you need to get done in the next several weeks, where appropriate, assign tasks to those who wish to participate, and provide due dates and touch base dates to ensure that projects are being completed on time, and as requested. Make the next 10 weeks as public and as open as possible.