

TAX MATTERS

**JUNE 4, 2009, Issue #09-22, by Bernard Ridens, Executive Director
Taxpayers Association of Vigo County, Inc.**

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REVIEW OF PAST TAX MATTERS

MAY 28, 2009 (#09-21)

- **VIGO COUNTY PAY 2009 TAX RATES – CERTIFIED FACTS**
 - Your property taxes to be paid in 2009 will be calculated differently than in past years. Included in that issue was the certified rate schedule, provided by the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance.
- **THE CONTINUING UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE DEBATE**
 - The Indiana Chamber of Commerce and Indiana Manufacturing Association's rebuttal to Indiana Senate Majority Caucus defending the new unemployment insurance law. Their version was "15 Facts You Need to Know About the Largest Tax Increase on Indiana Businesses in State History."
- **TWO ALTERNATIVE TAXES**
 - The FairTax and the value-added tax.

MAY 21, 2009 (#09-20)

- **THE OTHER SIDE OF LAST WEEK'S UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REPORT**
 - This week we are running an article sent by the Indiana Senate Majority Caucus through e-mail. This article includes a discussion of the 15 facts "critics apparently didn't want you to know about our efforts to make unemployment insurance work for all Hoosiers – small-business owners, industry leaders and their employees."
- **WASTE TREATMENT BID RESULTS**
 - Last Thursday, May 14th, the Board of Public Works and Safety used a reverse auction service to conduct bids on three wastewater utility pickup trucks. The auction was 1 hour and 32 minutes long.
- **NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP CITY REPORTS**
 - Pat Martin, the City Planner; and Darrell Zeck, the Director of Public Affairs attended the Neighborhood Partnership meeting held April 28, 2009.

The Taxpayers Association is a not-for-profit organization supported by membership dues. Any citizen or group of citizens in Vigo County may be a member.

1. GOVERNOR'S BUDGET ADDRESS

**Governor Mitch Daniels
Budget Address
June 1, 2009**

Good evening, citizens and taxpayers.

As you know, the legislature didn't pass a budget before they adjourned a month ago. That's OK, because the one they were working on assumed over a billion dollars of revenue we clearly will never have. So it would have spent way beyond our current means, wiped out our state savings account, and forced a big tax increase. I'd have had to veto it, and we'd be right where we are today.

To their credit, the legislative leadership quickly came up with a good plan for starting fresh, this time with a more believable estimate of how much money we really will have to work with.

Despite the terrible national economy, Indiana remains in vastly better shape than most states, and any of our neighbors. We have over a billion dollars in reserves, and a AAA credit rating. Everywhere else, any reserves are long gone. They are slashing education by as much as 10 to 15 percent; they're releasing convicts from prison early; and, worst of all when families are struggling, [they're raising taxes](#). There's only one reason why we are so different: because we have held government spending down to the level of our income. But if we lose our sense of discipline now, in no time we'll look just like Michigan, or Illinois, or, heaven forbid, California.

Since my first submission in January, state revenues have slipped even further, an unprecedented 8 percent below last year. When businesses don't make profits, investors have losses not gains, and people are out of work, earning less and spending less, tax payments plummet.

It's not pleasant, but it's reality, so let's deal with it. I have modified further the tight budget I proposed four months ago, and here are the major points:

Total state spending would be reduced by 2 1/2 percent. Many good ideas will just have to wait. Across state government, nothing, and I mean nothing, goes up. When your income drops by 8 percent, you can't increase your spending, on anything.

Here's a sample of the reductions we're prepared to make ([See attached document](#)). Please note that we have already reduced per capita state spending substantially the last four years.

There is only one exception. Public education, as well as student financial aid, would get a significant increase. Every school would receive more per student than it did this year. And if by some happy chance, state revenues turn out better than projected, I'm proposing that one of every two extra dollars go automatically to our schools, with the rest going to our savings account. Let's hope it happens.

These last couple years, Indiana schools have been among America's luckiest, fully funded through the downturn while schools in other states were clobbered by [massive cuts](#). Our goal is to keep it that way, although in times this tough no sector has a right to demand business as usual.

As always, I am ready to compromise and cooperate with the legislature, up to a point. I'm willing to see us use about a quarter of our surplus, leaving a billion dollars in reserve, but not a penny less. A billion is a lot of money, but it's only about 26 days of state operations. If legislators want to spend more on some favorite cause, that's fine as long as they offset it elsewhere. Add a dollar, cut a dollar. And, of course, no gimmicks, and no tax increases.

Our legislature has done a good job of helping us live within our income these last few years, while other states spent themselves into catastrophe. By working together again, we can protect services, taxpayers, and our pro-jobs business climate, positioning Indiana to lead economic recovery as it begins.

You can help. If you're a taxpayer, ask your legislators to put the general public interest first, and say no to the special interests who demand money we just don't have right now. When some lobbyist or legislator promises more spending on some favorite cause or project, ask him "Which of my taxes are you proposing to raise, and why do you want to do that?"

Across America, people are asking how Indiana has kept its head above water while everyone else is drowning. It's because we're Hoosiers, of course; we have this quaint custom of not spending money we don't have. If we keep our common sense now, we'll get through this very tough patch and come out ahead of other states.

2. APPEALS PROCESS

The following is an excerpt from the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance's Property Tax Assessment Appeals Process Fact Sheet. This is extremely useful if you feel your property was unfairly assessed and you want to appeal the valuation. The entire two-page fact sheet is located here:

<http://www.in.gov/dlgf/files/PropertyTaxAppealsProcess.pdf>

Property Tax Assessment Appeals Process: (Form 130)

(This form may be used but is not required)

A taxpayer has the right to initiate an appeal of the current year's assessed valuation. The first step in the appeals process begins with written notification to the local assessing official. Taxpayers have 45 days from the date of the notice of assessment to initiate an appeal. If no notice of assessment is given, the taxpayer must file the written appeal no later than May 10.

Evidence to support the taxpayer's case can be in the form of a sale of the subject property, sales of comparable properties, listing prices, offers to purchase, or an appraisal prepared by a licensed appraiser. Indiana law does not require a taxpayer to submit an appraisal of the subject property to appeal the assessment. While the Indiana Tax Court has held that an appraisal properly trended to the appropriate valuation date is the best evidence, it is not the only acceptable evidence. More information about evidence for appeals is available at: http://www.in.gov/dlgf/files/Memo_Appeals082407.pdf.

If the taxpayer and the assessing official do not agree on the resolution of all assessment issues or no informal meeting is held within 120 days of appeal, the Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals (PTABOA) must hold a hearing on the appeal within 180 days after the appeal was initiated. At the PTABOA hearing, the taxpayer may present reasons for disagreement with the assessment.

If a taxpayer is not satisfied with the decision of the PTABOA or if the PTABOA fails to hear the case within 180 days after the appeal was initiated or fails to issue a determination within 120 days after holding its hearing, the taxpayer has the right to appeal to the Indiana Board of Tax Review (IBTR) by filing a [Form 131](#). Taxpayers may contact the IBTR directly at (317) 232-3786 or visit the IBTR Web site "Guide to Appeals" at: <http://www.in.gov/ibtr/2330.htm>.

After being heard by the IBTR, taxpayers may also seek review by the Indiana Tax Court and, subsequently, the Indiana Supreme Court.

3. APPEAL FOR PAST COPIES OF THE TAXPAYERS ANNUAL REPORT

The staff librarian of the Taxpayers Association, in an attempt to archive at least one copy of each report produced by this association, has found that a few are missing. If you have an overcrowded shelf in your home or office library and would like to purge some copies of the annual report, we are looking for annual reports for years 1961, 1969, 1970, and 2003.

4. FREE ADVERTISEMENT – SEND US YOUR BUSINESS CARD

Send us a copy of your business card, and we will include it in the next issue of Tax Topics. Mail a copy for a better image, or e-mail a “jpeg” representation. This opportunity is open to members only.

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5. NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP AND TIRE AMNESTY DAY

The latest Terre Haute Neighborhood Partnership Steering Committee met May 26, 2009. City Councilman Todd Nation spoke in this meeting. The minutes of the meeting are attached to today's *Tax Matters*.

The following upcoming event was promoted during the meeting and recorded during the minutes:

The Clay-Owen-Vigo Solid Waste District will sponsor a “Tire Amnesty Day” at the Vigo County Fairgrounds on Saturday, June 6 from 8:00 a.m. ‘til 3:00 p.m. People can drop off tires up to 20 at a time at no cost. If they have more than 20 they want to drop off, they just have to call the Vigo Co. Health Department ahead of time to make arrangements. This is an effort to reduce mosquito breeding areas and to reduce the spread of the diseases mosquitoes carry.

6. PUBLIC MEETINGS

The purpose of this calendar is to encourage taxpayers to attend public meetings. Taxpaying persons working at your business or living in your neighborhood should be encouraged to attend a meeting of their choice at least once per year. The date and time for the meetings listed below are always subject to change. Organizations that are underlined have a web page that can be accessed by clicking on their respective hyperlinks. The contact person is also listed. You should call the appropriate office and confirm the date and time if you plan to attend.

Date	Time	Public Meeting	Location	Contact Info
Thur. Jun. 4	7:00 pm	<u>City Council – Sunshine Meeting</u>	City Hall – Courtroom	Michelle 232-3375
Sat. Jun. 6	8am – 3pm	Tire Amnesty Day	Vigo County Fairgrounds	Louise 462-3428
Mon. Jun. 8	2:00 pm	<u>Board of Public Works and Safety</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Robin 232-4767
Mon. Jun. 8	6:00 pm	West Terre Haute Town Board	500 W. Nat'l, WTH	Melody 533-2034
Tue. Jun. 9	9:00 am	<u>County Commissioners</u>	County Annex	Judy 462-3367
Tue. Jun. 9	4:15 pm	<u>Vigo County Redevelopment Commission</u>	County Annex	Amanda 234-2524
Tue. Jun. 9	4:30 pm	<u>County Council</u>	County Annex	Auditor 462-3361
Tue. Jun. 9	7:00 pm	Seelyville Town Board	Seelyville Water Office	Tamara 877-2665
Wed. Jun. 10	10:00 am	<u>County Board of Zoning Appeals</u>	County Annex	Judy 462-3367
Wed. Jun. 10	4:30 pm	<u>City Park Board – General Meeting</u>	Deming Park	Eddie 232-2727
Wed. Jun. 10	7:00 pm	<u>Airport Authority</u>	Airport	Kara 877-2524
Thur. Jun. 11	2:00 pm	<u>Board of Public Works and Safety – Reverse Auction</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Robin 232-4767
Thur. Jun. 11	7:00 pm	<u>City Council – Regular Meeting</u>	City Hall – Courtroom	Michelle 232-3375
Mon. Jun. 15	5:30 pm	<u>Human Relations Commission</u>	Booker T. Washington Center	Jeff 232-0110
Mon. Jun. 15	7:00 pm	<u>Vigo County Public Library</u>	Library – Main Branch	Nancy 232-1113
Tue. Jun. 16	9:00 am	<u>County Commissioners</u>	County Annex	Judy 462-3367
Tue. Jun. 16	10:00 am	<u>City Board of Sanitary Commissioners</u>	City Hall – 3 rd Floor	Sally 235-5458
Tue. Jun. 16	5:00 pm	<u>County Council</u>	County Annex	Auditor 462-3361
Wed. Jun. 17	9:30 am	Clay-Owen-Vigo Solid Waste District	109 E. Nat'l, Brazil IN	Janet 800-387-3380
Wed. Jun. 17	4:00 pm	<u>City Redevelopment Commission</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Phenny 232-0018
Thur. Jun. 18	2:00 pm	Tree Advisory Board	City Hall Mayor's Conf. Room	Jennifer 232-4028
Mon. Jun. 22	2:00 pm	<u>Board of Public Works and Safety</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Robin 232-4767
Mon. Jun. 22	4:00 pm	<u>County Park Board</u>	County Annex	Julia 462-3391
Mon. Jun. 22	5:30 pm	Terre Haute Housing Authority	2001 N. 19 th Street	Jeff 232-1381
Mon. Jun. 22	7:00 pm	<u>Vigo County School Board</u>	VCSC Board Room	Judy 462-4216
Tue. Jun. 23	9:00 am	<u>County Commissioners</u>	County Annex	Judy 462-3367
Wed. Jun. 24	4:30 pm	<u>City Park Board – Business Meeting</u>	Deming Park	Eddie 232-2727
Wed. Jun. 24	5:30 pm	<u>Information Technology Advisory Board</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Brad 244-2316
Wed. Jun. 24	7:00 pm	<u>Airport Authority</u>	Airport	Kara 877-2524

7. SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*Some mistakes are too much fun to only
make once.*

END

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NOTES OF MEETING

SUBJECT: Terre Haute Neighborhood Partnership
(THNP) Steering Committee

DATE: May 26, 2009

**The next meeting will be Tuesday,
June 23, 2009 at 7:00 pm at the
former Crawford School at
Crawford and South 5th Streets.**

PRESENT:

Dave Thomas	Dobbs Glen
Marie Pontius	Farrington's Grove
Martha Taha	
Annetta Sweatt	13 th Street Corridor Neighborhood
Steve Pontius	Farrington's Grove
Liz Miller	13 th Street Corridor Neighborhood
Kianna Sweatt	Farrington's Grove
Steve Hills	13 th Street Corridor Neighborhood
Lisa Hills	13 th Street Corridor Neighborhood
Tom Hildebrand	Ryves Neighborhood
John Woelfle	Deming Woods
Todd Nation	City Council – Farrington's Grove
Shirley Perez	13 th Street Corridor Neighborhood
John Etling	Ryves Neighborhood – Ohio Blvd Neighborhood

TOPICS DISCUSSED:

Welcome and Introductions: President Dave Thomas welcomed everyone to the meeting, and each person introduced themselves.

Minutes: The minutes of the April 28th meeting were approved as distributed on a motion from John Woelfle, seconded by Steve Hills.

Treasurer's report: John Woelfle reported that the bank account balance is \$4,520.55. Several neighborhoods still need to pay dues including Collett Park, Farrington's Grove and Edgewood Grove.

City Government Report: City Councilman, Todd Nation

- Todd Nation talked about an historic preservation ordinance he is submitting to City Council for their consideration. The purpose is to protect Terre Haute's historic districts and individual historic structures. Currently Terre Haute is the last second class city in the state to put a Historic Preservation Commission in place with enabling legislation. All the other cities, including Gary, now have such commissions. He expects City Council to have a first reading on this at their July 2nd and 9th meetings. The last time such an ordinance was proposed was in 1994. He feels Terre Haute is ready to try again.
- The Clay-Owen-Vigo Solid Waste District will sponsor a "Tire Amnesty Day" at the Vigo County Fairgrounds on Saturday, June 6 from 8:00 a.m. 'til 3:00 p.m. People can drop off tires up to 20 at a

time at no cost. If they have more than 20 they want to drop off, they just have to call the Vigo Co. Health Department ahead of time to make arrangements. This is an effort to reduce mosquito breeding areas and to reduce the spread of the diseases mosquitoes carry. The county didn't hold a tire amnesty day last year, so Todd said he has quite a few tires stockpiled that he has collected from alleys and other sites. Steve Hills mentioned that there is a pile of old tires near Hulman and the railroad tracks in among tall weeds. It's on the edge of the 13th St. neighborhood and he doesn't know who owns the lot. Todd said this could be a logical project for volunteers to clean up, but if it's on private property you'd have to check into that. This site used to be a junk yard; the vehicles are gone, but the tires remain. Todd said he will call Code Enforcement as to the status of the property.

- Martha Taha asked about the status of the Vigo County Fair Grounds itself. She said she would hate to see it turned into another shopping center. Todd said the Fair Grounds Board didn't accept the development deal offered to them some months ago, so for now, the Fair Grounds stay as they are. Additionally, this site is outside the city limits, so it would need County government action.
- Steve Hills asked if the historic preservation ordinance would help to bring in more grants. Todd said, "No, probably not." If an area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, then you could tap into some state and federal tax credits, but that is separate from what he's talking about. There used to be more money available, but there's really not a lot of money out there for historic preservation. Marie Pontius added that this effort for an historic preservation ordinance was prompted by concerns over the demolition of historic properties. The intent is to preserve the heritage and culture for the whole city.

Old Business:

- Report on the Mayor's summits – Marie said she and Steve Hills attended the mayor's summit at Fuqua Elementary School and handed out THNP brochures. She gave some to Darrel Zeck who said he would put them in a display rack in the lobby of city hall. There were about 30 people present and about six city staff. Steve Hills said there was a man in the audience who was a railroad inspector. He apparently worked for the railroad, but was the guy who levied fines if the trains blocked the crossings for too long a time. He said he had volunteered to serve on a railroad committee under the previous city administration, but that committee may have not been formed, since the man was never called. He said he was still interested in helping in this regard. Mayor Bennett said he was very interested in this man, and the man exchanged business cards with Darrel Zeck. At the Fuqua School meeting, Mayor Bennett gave a Power Point presentation on the status of projects and budget items in the city. One of the things that impressed Marie was when the Mayor said the city was expecting about \$1.8 million from HUD for the Neighborhood Stabilization grant program plus about \$2.2 million for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Emergency Housing program. This is about \$1 million more than the city usually gets for their CDBG entitlement, and it will make a total of about \$4,000,000 coming into the city that will be spent improving neighborhoods. The Redevelopment Department will administer these funds.
- There will be another summit for the east side of town tomorrow (Wednesday, May 27) at the First Baptist Church on Poplar. Dave Thomas said he was planning to go and had invited several of his neighbors in Dobbs Glen. Marie said she would attend and take more THNP brochures.

- Discussion of National Night Out was tabled again because Sgt. Dave Smith wasn't present. It was mentioned that the THNP had participated a couple summers ago when the event was in Deming Park, but that it really didn't fit our needs or the needs of the folks who attended the event. We didn't participate last year.

New Business and Neighborhood Announcements

- Dave Thomas had received an application from the Twelve Points Greater Northside Association, Inc. to join the Terre Haute Neighborhood Partnership. Dave moved that this organization be allowed to join the THNP. Steve Pontius seconded the motion and it was a unanimous vote in favor. Twelve Points' representative, Rich Curtis, was not present but didn't need to be.
- Todd Nation said that Downtown Terre Haute is also interested in joining the THNP. Dave Thomas said he would email the application to Todd and to Andrew Conner.
- Steve Hills asked about affiliation of the THNP with the national organization. Marie Pontius said the only national organization she knew about was Neighborhoods, USA or NUSA. The THNP was a member of NUSA for a couple years, but the only thing that organization does is hold annual conferences. There is no training or funding available. All their conferences seemed to be so far away (Sacramento, CA; Raleigh, NC) and it would be so expensive to send people to them that we hadn't attended any. Also with the Midwest Regional Neighborhood Network Conference (RNNC) we were getting the same value from those conferences as we would from the national conference and at less money; so we could send more people. Marie let the membership in NUSA lapse. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be a national umbrella organization for neighborhoods similar to Keep America Beautiful as an umbrella organization for such organizations as Keep Terre Haute Beautiful.
- Lisa Hills asked about establishing a method for communication among neighborhoods, such as a bulletin board or kiosk for community calendars. Where would we put it? It might make sense to have one in each neighborhood. Individual neighborhoods could do this if they wanted to for their neighborhood. Marie said they had talked about a website for THNP, but it never happened. Lisa said that one problem with a website is that not everyone has a computer. Dave Thomas said that Dobbs Glen has struggled with this. They did establish a website, but it didn't work. People didn't look at it. They hand-deliver newsletters to every house in their neighborhood but that's a lot of work. Of course it helps that it's a relatively small neighborhood. A "telephone tree" worked, but you had to keep re-doing it with each election and as people moved into and out of the neighborhood. Some areas find success with the "block captain" structure to get information dispersed. If bulletin boards or kiosks are used, it would be good to pick places where people are already going, like a neighborhood drugstore or laundromat.
- Annetta Sweatt would like the THNP to give beautification awards – maybe in the form of a lawn ornament like the pink flamingoes used by the American Cancer Society to raise money. Downtown Terre Haute gives Heritage Ambassador Awards.
- Martha Taha said her concern was there is too much dog waste in the city, especially in city parks. People aren't cleaning up after their dogs. She is going to a Park Board meeting at Torner Center to ask them to ban dogs from the parks. It's a health issue. There should be one

park where people with dogs can go. They were going to use a part of Fairbanks Park for this but it is not environmentally safe yet. Martha said she took children to a park and had to leave because of a mean dog in the park and because of the dog waste. Steve Hills said there would probably be lots of opposition to banning dogs from city parks. There are already ordinances in place; people just have to obey them, or they have to be better enforced.

- The skate park at Voorhees Park was recently attacked by graffiti vandals. The city used a power washer to clean it off, but the chemical remover costs about \$300 per gallon. It works well, but is expensive. This is not an innocent prank; it is vandalism. Todd Nation said he thought there was an outcry this time because it was the first time this park had been hit. He doesn't think the vandalism was done by the kids who use the park.
- Annetta said, in past years, she has seen a lot of little flags along Ohio Boulevard either for Memorial Day or the Fourth of July. Does anyone know who does this? It was thought it was a private individual who did it to decorate the neighborhood for this holiday.
- Todd Nation said that Farrington's Grove will hold a neighborhood-wide yard sale on Saturday, June 6, with the rain date being the next Saturday, June 13. He is hoping that either Pat Martin or Andrew Conner will present the Downtown Vision Plan to the THNP at the next meeting, June 23. Also there are several downtown festivals planned for September: Blues at the Crossroads on September 11 and 12; and the Terre Haute Street Fair on September 24, 25, and 26.
- Marie told everyone to remember that the Regional Neighborhood Network Conference (RNNC) will be in Decatur, Illinois on September 17, 18 and 19. She and Annetta will be driving over to Decatur on June 18 for the RNNC Steering Committee meeting. She will have more information after they get back from that meeting.
- Steve Pontius said that Farrington's Grove's new, brown street signs have been made and delivered to the City Street Department. Brad Miller's men will be putting them up soon. The next neighborhood organization meeting will be Tuesday, June 2 at 7:00 pm at the former Crawford School. Todd mentioned the yard sale. ISU assistant track coach, Geoff Wayton, is planning to hold a 5-K race through Farrington's Grove on August 22, which will be followed by the neighborhood's annual block party. Todd Nation and Steve Pontius have been working with City Forester, Bill Kincius, about the trees on South 4th Street. Many of them are dead or half-dead and need to be replaced. There are also a couple street lights that have not been replaced since the construction work was finished. John Woelfle asked what will be done with the old street signs when they're replaced. Steve said he had mentioned this to Brad Miller and Brad said normally they are sold as scrap. They would probably get more money for the city or the neighborhood if they could be auctioned off.

SUBMITTED BY: Marie Pontius

Please contact Marie Pontius directly at 478-0686 or by email for any corrections and/or additions.