

Also In This Issue:

Letters

Privatizing the Riverport: What are the options? What are the advantages/disadvantages of each option?

A presentation of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Privatization of the Owensboro Riverport

Report on state budget forum

"We the People" II

You can help shape the event

The Executive Inn Property: Our Community Vision

Workshop Participant Guide and Report

(These documents are separate and can be downloaded at plfo.org)



Additional photos of the proposed new hospital can be found at <http://www.omhs.org>

Reflections on the hospital plan

Concerned citizens made a good faith effort to obtain relevant information. They asked legitimate questions, did not threaten or disrupt. They were civil, respectful and acknowledged OMHS accomplishments.

Questions and concerns bubbled up

The Public Life Foundation for at least three years has raised questions and concerns about the Owensboro Medical Health System (OMHS) plan to build a new hospital on a suburban site. The OMHS plan now appears to be inevitable.

Without soliciting public input, we heard from a cross section of our community through phone calls, emails and personal visits. People stopped us on the street. They brought up the matter at social gatherings. These were solid citizens. Reputable community leaders. People with integrity. People with backgrounds in law, engineering, finance and public policy. People with no stake in the outcome. And for every person who would speak out, many more said they could not, including a father whose daughter worked at the hospital, a doctor who could not risk alienation from hospital officials, a local supplier who depended on hospital business.

Concerned citizens responded

In recent months, as more details about the OMHS plan were discovered, feelings intensified to the point where some of these citizens mobilized to challenge the proposal. They were not opposed outright to the OMHS plan, but they did have a growing list of questions and concerns. They were not very well organized and had no designated leader. They had no money. They had no staff nor consultants nor PowerPoint presentations. They had little time to prepare anything.

They were David, up against a Goliath with deep pockets and a room full of lawyers and consultants and troop reinforcements from city and county governments, planning commission, chamber of commerce, economic development officials, labor unions and others who had lined up in support of the OMHS plan.

Dismissed as gadflies

Those challenging the OMHS plan were labeled “uninformed,” “anti-progress” and “troublemakers” by officials, lawyers and consultants. Boosters of the hospital plan were particularly agitated that the opponents waited until the eleventh hour to challenge the plan after no such concerns were raised during the three town meetings sponsored by OMHS.

An honest effort continued

Despite the limitations and charges, the initiative of these citizens became a prime example of responsible citizen action. They had nothing to gain personally from the outcome. They made a good faith effort to research or obtain relevant information. They asked legitimate questions. They did not threaten or disrupt; their presentations were civil, respectful and acknowledged OMHS accomplishments.

Officials responded: “These people are misinformed”

Of course, lay citizens don’t know as much as OMHS staff, board members and consultants. How could they, as long as the hospital selectively releases information?

Ask yourself whether OMHS was forthcoming about any of the following:

- presenting all the site options?
- the stop light on the bypass?
- the planning commission staff report on the Pleasant Valley Road site?
- the soils test and the cost of remedial work?
- the flammability of oil tanks and pipelines?
- the cost of infrastructure to be absorbed by the taxpayers?
- how much space it will be abandoning at the current campus or how much property it has acquired that it will now not need?
- the actual cost of the project, the risk involved and impact on rates, fees and insurance premiums?
- sharing all of this information with its own board of directors?

In learning from this experience, may we build trust and create a stronger sense of community.

Why were OMHS town meetings ineffective?

To its credit, OMHS held three town meetings: 1) on finances, 2) on the site, and 3) on the design of the hospital. The meetings were well-promoted, attractively packaged, but poorly attended. (Most attendees were OMHS employees or those who do business with the hospital.)

While these events provided information to the community, they were more about selling the community on the decisions that were already made. And while the meetings were open to the public, these were OMHS presentations. The format, material and speakers were carefully orchestrated by hospital officials and public relations specialists. Questions were submitted and screened. Every question may have been read, and there may have been a response to every question, but meaningful two-way dialogue and deliberation was lacking.

Deliberation means that participants reserve judgment until they hear all sides of an issue. It means that participants are willing to change their mind. When it came time for public input through these forums, does anyone think that OMHS was willing to change its mind? The OMHS town meetings were ineffective because the public knew it was a “done deal.”

Let’s shoot straight with the public

A community institution that is open, transparent, that wants to build trust and public support, shares its information – warts and all. It shoots straight with the public. During its presentation to city government, the planning commission and the board of adjustments, every point in reference to the Pleasant Valley Road site was positive. Not one deficiency was acknowledged. The public is not so naïve to believe that some sites are absolutely flawless. Every site has advantages and disadvantages. OMHS seemed more interested in selling officials than leveling with the public.

Good can come from this

OMHS officials are even more confident that a sparkling new hospital will be in this community’s future on Pleasant Valley Road east of the bypass. Perhaps, as a result of this small pesky citizens group, officials will be more mindful of the poor soils and the danger from the pipeline pressures on the site. Perhaps they have a stronger sense of how unpopular a stop light on the bypass will be, and will move expeditiously to remove it as soon as possible. Perhaps next time, officials will first look at innovative urban redevelopment options before building over prime agricultural land or the flood plain. Perhaps they will see the value of forthright public education, dialogue and deliberation before the next major community decision is made.

OMHS is our community’s largest employer. As our only hospital and the primary health care provider in an 11-county region, it is well-positioned for financial success if it doesn’t take on too much debt.

OMHS has been recognized for excellence in many areas, including an impressive award for quality of care that places it in the top five percent in the nation. There are many well-intentioned, dedicated and caring people among its staff, board members and volunteers.

It will not be easy for the citizens who have challenged OMHS to put these issues behind them when there is lingering apprehension over cost and financial risk, safety, congestion and more. Citizens have every right to scrutinize our community hospital, to ask questions, to share concerns. And when they make a good faith effort to assemble relevant information and advocate in a civil manner, they deserve respect and commendation. In learning from this experience, may we build trust and create a stronger sense of community.

– Rodney Berry

Rodney Berry is president of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro. The foundation promotes broad and meaningful citizen participation in community decisions and public policy.

The annual OMHS “Report to the Community” is Dec. 7, 6:00 p.m. at the RiverPark Center.

Letters

Multiple Resources Needed

A Letter to the Editor in response to "Should we draw the line on coal-fired power plants?" in Volume 6 Issue 5 of the Public Life Advocate

I read with interest the article about coal-fired power plants. My interest was piqued by the reference to John Blair and Valley Watch as the source of the information. Equally as interesting was the information about the illnesses in the Evansville area as compared to Ft. Wayne. There are a few intentional omissions by Mr. Blair that are very, very pertinent.

First of all, the prevailing winds from our area, including the Henderson county area, do not go towards Evansville. They go directly towards Louisville, Cincinnati, then Boston. Secondly, he failed to mention that one of the largest single polluting power plants in Indiana is the AB Brown facility that sits on the Vanderberg/Posey county line, just a bit southwest of Evansville. Thirdly, he failed to mention that their area also has the highest concentration of several rare cancers in the country. Those are due to the former GE Plastic, now Saudi-owned plant located west of Mt. Vernon, IN, which makes it southwest of Evansville. These are not just my opinions, they are documented fact.

Mr. Blair has for years filed protest after protest over manufacturing facilities and power plants on the KY side of the river. He has never filed the first protest over any modifications of additions to the former GE location – a location that has one facility that will not allow women to work unless they have been sterilized.

The notion that even if new power plants are built that the older will remain online is also debatable. If the emission standards are established that would render those older plants to no longer be feasible to modify or even operate, they will simply be taken out of operation.

I agree that there is no such thing as clean coal. However, there is such a thing as "cleaner" coal. With our abundance of coal in our area, cleaner coal technology will allow newer research to possibly be conducted in our area, which will drive our technologies knowledge base. Please do not fall into the mindset being imposed by John Blair concerning additional coal-fired power plants in our area. He is agenda driven, and his agenda does not include any economic growth for our area. Get information from multiple sources, even if they sound credible, their agenda may not be.

I would also have attended the meeting that was held that these items were discussed, but I had a previous business engagement. I have no agenda in regards to coal-fired power plants. In fact, I really want no part of them. My business is in alternative renewable energy.

Thank you,
Anthony Taylor

Response:

Well, first, I would ask Mr. Taylor to provide the documentation he claims to have. It does not exist. All of my presentation is based on data provided by the Environmental Protection Agency, Census Bureau and the Department of Energy.

The winds blow from different directions all the time. In fact, when we have most of our air pollution problems around here, the wind is "calm" <5 miles per hour from the north. Valley Watch has done all it could to force GE and Sabc to clean up their horrendous cancer causing emissions. Have we been successful, only partially since they are still emitting more than a ton per day of methylene chloride, down from more than ten tons per day. Valley Watch has a long record of challenging emissions from the entire lower Ohio River Valley.

The same can be said for all the polluting industries on both sides of the river. One of the problems with living in this area: It does not matter which way the wind blows, you are going to get pollution from a power plant nearby. In the summer, the wind isopleths do indicate a southwest wind blows more often than from other directions. In the winter, the same can be said from the northwest. Most of our storms come from the southwest and northwest.

It is patently untrue that Valley Watch has not challenged manufacturing facilities and power plants in Kentucky. We are proud of our record fighting pollution on both sides of the river. BASF, Scott Paper, Con Agra, were all run off by the presence of Valley Watch on this side of the river. Scott located in Newman (west of Owensboro) and we did all we could to make sure it operated in a cleaner fashion than was proposed. As far as power plants are concerned, we have fought them consistently on both sides of the river. Pollution does not respect political or geographic boundaries. It is true that since Valley Watch was formed, there have been more stupid ideas come from economic development people in Kentucky than there have been in Indiana. However, we are fighting the Rockport gasification facility even harder than Cash Creek because it stands a better chance of being approved.

I am not sure of the issue Mr. Taylor raises with regard to sterilization at GE and Sabc.

So far, there is no discussion of shutting down any of the old power plants, except in the case of the Duke Edwardsport plant which is going from an unused 160 megawatt plant to a 630 megawatt plant. Power plants are being proposed, not to replace but as an addition to the huge levels of pollution we already must endure.

I have no problem with research, but the current proposals are not demonstration plants. Instead, they are all commercial scale facilities using untested technology that should be demonstrated first. We have not objected to the KSGS drilling in Hancock County or similar efforts in Indiana except when the taxpayer or ratepayer is expected to assume the financial risk for these plants. It seems prudent that more should be known about these technologies before moving to commercial scale.

Yes, I admit to having a health agenda. Unfortunately, coal plants are the single largest source of deadly air pollution in the nation and we live in the center of the largest concentration of those in the world.

As long as our government takes sides and continues to give the coal industry huge subsidies to assure their continued survival, the prospects of most of the alternatives ever getting off the ground are remote. I personally would advocate that all subsidies be eliminated and all externalized cost to our environment and health be added into the cost of production and then let the free market decide. But today, the largest energy subsidy is paid through the ill health of people who must drink water polluted by coal mining and waste disposal and breathe air fouled by noxious poisons that come from coal plants, recorded in the millions of tons.

– John Blair

Mayor's Committee on the Privatization of the Riverport

On June 2, 2009 Owensboro Mayor Ron Payne appointed the following citizens to the Advisory Committee on the Privatization of the Owensboro Riverport:

Alan Braden, Chair Suzanne Northern Blazar
George Hulse Dean Jones
G. Ted Smith



All committee meetings and forums have been open to the public. Committee members identified nine options and set forth advantages and disadvantages of each option.

On December 1, the committee recommended to the Owensboro City Commission that the riverport

- not be sold outright
- remain publicly owned and governed by a public board of directors
- explore contracting with a private firm for loading, unloading and warehousing

- continue efforts to sell the former Green River Steel property and several warehouses
- lease property to private sector partners

The recommendations were forwarded by the city commission to the riverport board of directors.

We commend committee members for their objective analysis, open and transparent deliberations, and for their encouragement of public participation.

OWENSBORO RIVERPORT OPTIONS: ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

Option 1: Make No Change

ADVANTAGES

- Stable short-term
- Maintain dividend - profitable
- Maintain employment
- Most flexibility with public / private partnerships
- Maintains control over operations & property (long/short term)
- Goal is economic growth for region
- Customer perception
- Financial stability for growth
- Limited debt
- Opportunity for federal/state grants
- Maintains option to sell in better market conditions
- Volunteer board committed to community

DISADVANTAGES

- Limited dividend to city
- May limit economic development
- Untaxed assets – real & property
- Continue competition with private local businesses
- Retains all risk of asset ownership
- Limited marketing network
- May have limited expertise in some areas
- Less flexibility in confidential negotiations
- Does not use local financing
- Continues possible duplication of government services and assets regarding economic development

Option 2: Sell All

ADVANTAGES

- Provides one-time capital gain for city
- Provides true entrepreneurial competition
- Reduces future risk to community if port falters
- Increase in all taxes
- Provide potential annuity (better cash return)
- Eliminates debt
- Possible increase in employment
- Eliminates local politics & board pressures

DISADVANTAGES

- Poor current market conditions
- Lose control
- Might reduce / eliminate jobs
- Might lose existing / future (potential) dividends
- Lose mission statement
- Lose economic development focus
- Might restrict customer base
- Lose tax reduction for expansion purposes
- Might lose current customers
- Community perception
- Local politics / boards – input reduced or missing
- Customer perception

Option 3: Lease All

ADVANTAGES

- Provides annuity to city
- Retains property ownership
- Restricts future capital outlay
- New expertise
- More flexibility in decision making
- Increase in taxation
- Capital improvements made by leasee
- Levels playing field for public / private competition

DISADVANTAGES

- Poor current market conditions
- Lose control (some)
- Might reduce / eliminate jobs
- Might lose existing / future (potential) dividends
- Lose mission statement
- Lose economic development focus
- Might restrict customer base
- Lose tax reduction for expansion purposes
- Might lose current customers
- Community perception
- Local politics / boards – input reduced or missing
- Customer perception
- Possible change in operators
- Loss of potential upside
- Assets remain untaxed
- Public assets compete with private
- Potential legal issues with current leases

Option 4: Contract Operations

ADVANTAGES

- Stevedores could bring marketing expertise
- Stevedores could bring operating expertise
- More cost efficient / effective
- Maintains dividend structure
- Potential increase in dividend
- Potential cash from sale of equipment
- Potentially reduces public / private competition
- Allows management to focus more on economic development

DISADVANTAGES

- Lose control (some)
- Might have continuity issues
- Potential strikes or union issues - stevedores

Option 5: Contract Warehousing, Sell Buildings, Retain Lands

ADVANTAGES

- Levels playing field
- Places warehouse property on tax rolls
- Reduces risk
- Provides cash windfall
- Increase in taxes
- Increase public / private partnerships
- Decreases public / private competition

DISADVANTAGES

- Potential to reduce/forfeit cash flow
- Uncertain market conditions
- Lose control (some)
- Lose flexibility (some)

Option 6: Lease Land Only

ADVANTAGES

- Place / retain property on tax rolls
- Increase public / private partnerships
- Provide fixed cash flow
- Spread (reduce) risk to community
- Allows board / management to increase focus on economic development

DISADVANTAGES

- Restrict economic development focus
- Restrict customers that want to own
- Restrict upside potential

Option 7: Sell Land Only

ADVANTAGES

- Place / retain property on tax rolls
- Increase public / private partnerships
- Provide capital gain
- Spread (reduce) risk to community
- Increase focus on economic development
- Attract ownership customers

DISADVANTAGES

- Eliminate economic development focus
- Restrict customers that want to lease
- Eliminate upside potential
- Give up all control as land is sold

Option 8: P.I.L.O.T. – Payment in Lieu of Taxes

ADVANTAGES

- Structures a payment to city
- Reduces public advantage

DISADVANTAGES

- Does not add to tax rolls
- Restrict public-to-public competition

Option 9: Any Combination of Prior Options

Report on the public forum

Kentucky State Budget: Challenges & Opportunities

A public discussion presented by The Kentucky Tax and Budget Initiative (a project of the Kentucky Youth Advocates)

October 28, 2009

Participants:

45 pre-registered
7 no-shows
16 walk-ups
54 participated
24 completed questionnaires

Presenter:

Brigitte Ramsey, Budget Analyst
Kentucky Youth Advocates

Sponsors:

Kentucky Youth Advocates
Citizens for Good Government
Wendell Ford Government Education Center
Hager Educational Foundation
Owensboro Museum of Science and History
Public Life Foundation of Owensboro
We the People Initiative

Discussion Facilitators:

Belinda Abell
Ed Allen
Rodney Berry
Bob Darling
Don McCarty
Kathy Olson

Moderator:

Keith Sanders, Executive Director,
Hager Educational Foundation

Location:

Owensboro Museum of Science & History

Materials developed by:

Ky. Youth Advocates and a local steering committee*

Participants:

Belinda Abell*
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Dr. Larry Durrence
Kelley Fallon
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Evan Taylor
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Rich Nading
Kathy Olson
Jim Riney
Keith Sanders*
Meredith Skaggs
Kathy Strobel*
Tommy Thompson
Larry Vick
Bruce Whitmer
Leo Wright

* steering committee

Format

- **Welcome and Overview** Keith Sanders
- **PowerPoint Presentation** Brigitte Ramsey
- **Review of Dialogue Guide:** Keith Sanders
Overview, Goals, Ground Rules
- **Review of Option 1: Decrease Expenses** Keith Sanders
What would characterize such an option?
Potential advantages and disadvantages
Small group discussion period # 1
Report from tables
Facilitators
Recorders
- **Review of Option 2: Increase Revenues** Keith Sanders
What would characterize such an option?
Potential advantages and disadvantages
Small group discussion period # 2
Report from tables
Facilitators
Recorders
- **Review of Option 3: Decrease Expenses and Increase Revenues** Keith Sanders
What would characterize such an option?
Potential advantages and disadvantages
Small group discussion period # 3
Report from tables
Facilitators
Recorders
- **Closing comments** Participants
- **Questionnaire** Participants

Executive Summary

Citizens wrestle with state budget challenges

Following an orientation on state government finances by Kentucky Tax and Budget Initiative analyst Brigitte Ramsey, a group of local residents shared ideas and ranked their preferences for ways to balance the state budget and sustain vital services during a public forum in Owensboro on October 28.

Ramsey's presentation was supplemented by a review of strategic options for addressing state budget challenges, potential advantages and disadvantages of each option, and three small group discussion periods followed by reports from each group. The forum attracted 54 participants; 24 submitted a questionnaire following the forum.

Be efficient, cut spending, increase taxes responsibly

Participants acknowledged that state government should intensify efforts to be more efficient and reduce spending, but they also indicated that the financial difficulties in state government reflect more of a revenue problem (62 percent) than a spending problem (37 percent).

Preferred ways to generate more revenue

Participants endorsed ten forms of tax increases to address state government financial challenges. The top choices* were:

- Create a more progressive income tax (91 percent)
- Expand the tax on restaurant sales (91 percent)
- Increase income taxes (83 percent)
- Increase cigarette/tobacco taxes (79 percent)
- Tax services (79 percent)
- Increase taxes on wealthy individuals (79 percent)
- Tax soft drink sales (75 percent)

* Participants "agreed somewhat" or "agreed strongly" with the choice

Even though the option had not been offered on the questionnaire, a tax on Internet sales was a popular suggestion.

Note: By indicating support for these options, it should not be construed that participants endorsed raising all the different forms of taxation that were presented. Participants may have been suggesting that a reasonable plan to address state government financial challenges could be drawn from the options they support.

Role for state government

Participants were presented with 30 examples of current state government services. They acknowledged that 22 are vital roles for state

government. These include the following (and the percent of participants who checked it as a vital role for state government):

- Programs for abused and neglected children (96 percent)
- Health care for people/families with low incomes (92 percent)
- K-12 public education (87 percent)
- Roads, bridges and highways (87 percent)
- Air and water pollution regulation (83 percent)
- Early childhood education (79 percent)
- Public universities (75 percent)
- Community and technical colleges (71 percent)
- Programs for the elderly (71 percent)
- School nurses/immunizations (67 percent)
- Mine safety regulation (67 percent)
- Sewer/water systems (67 percent)
- Substance abuse facilities and programs (62 percent)
- Facilities and programs for people with developmental disabilities (62 percent)
- Workforce training programs (62 percent)
- Youth detention facilities and programs (62 percent)
- Parole administration (62 percent)
- Programs for abused spouses (62 percent)
- Alternative education (e.g., GED, programs, KET) (58 percent)
- Adult prisons and jails (58 percent)
- Rehabilitation programs (58 percent)
- Programs for the poor/single parent families (58 percent)
- Programs for the homeless (54 percent)

The following roles for state government received less than a majority of votes. This suggests that participants would be more likely to support spending cuts in these areas:

- Home health care (46 percent)
- Nursing homes (46 percent)
- Factory farm regulation (46 percent)
- Legal service for the poor (33 percent)
- Industrial parks (33 percent)
- Economic development incentives (25 percent)

For a complete tabulation of the forum questionnaires, contact: Kathy Strobel at 270/685-2652 ● kathy.strobel@plfo.org

For more information, contact: Keith Sanders (moderator) at 270/685-5707 ● ksanders@lahef.org

Results of Questionnaires

Share your views of possible strategies to address state budget challenges:

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree Somewhat	Not Sure	Agree Somewhat	Agree Strongly
Cut government spending	8%	12%	4%	33%	42%
Find more efficiencies				25%	75%
Eliminate waste, fraud and abuse		4%		12%	83%
Eliminate loopholes and exemptions				29%	71%
Expand gaming	17%	8%	17%	42%	17%
Create a more progressive income tax	4%	4%		37%	54%

Increase taxes:

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree Somewhat	Not Sure	Agree Somewhat	Agree Strongly
...on cigarette sales		8%	12%	29%	50%
...on services	4%	8%	8%	46%	33%
...on incomes	8%	8%		58%	25%
...on restaurant sales	4%	4%		54%	37%
...on soft drinks	4%	8%	12%	29%	46%
...on the wealthy	8%	8%		58%	21%
...on business net profits	8%	12%	17%	29%	25%
...on retail sales	4%	17%	21%	33%	17%
...on estates	17%	21%	21%	33%	4%
...on property	17%	21%	21%	33%	4%

...other suggestions: Internet sales (listed three times)
 Institute combined tax reporting
 Collaborate with other states
 Gross receipts

Educate! Educate! Educate!
 Reform the state pension system
 Toll roads
 Tobacco

Do you think that state government has	(check one)
...more of a revenue problem than a spending problem	62%
...more of a spending problem than a revenue problem	37%

What do you consider to be vital roles of state government:

Health Care	(check all that apply)
for people/families with low income	92%
school nurses/immunizations	67%
substance abuse facilities and programs	62%
facilities and programs for people with developmental disabilities	62%
home health care	46%
nursing homes	46%

Results of Questionnaires (continued)

What do you consider to be vital roles of state government (continued):

Public Education	(check all that apply)
early childhood education	79%
K-12	87%
alternative education (e.g., GED programs, KET)	58%
community and technical colleges	71%
public universities	75%
workforce training programs	62%

Corrections	(check all that apply)
adult prisons and jails	58%
youth detention facilities and programs	62%
legal service for the poor	33%
parole administration	62%
rehabilitation programs	58%

Environmental Protection	(check all that apply)
mine safety regulation	67%
air and water pollution regulation	83%
factory farm regulation	46%

Economic Development	(check all that apply)
roads, highways and bridges	87%
sewer/water systems	67%
industrial parks	33%
workforce training	54%
incentives	29%

Social Services	(check all that apply)
programs for the poor/single parent families	58%
programs for abused and neglected children	96%
programs for abused spouses	62%
programs for the elderly	71%
programs for the homeless	54%

Other views on what is a vital role for state government:

- Support arts and culture
- Wish we had an office of Riverkeeper for Kentucky
- Program for abused elderly
- Program to enforce mine safety
...or shut 'em down. Too many violations ignored.
- Programs for inmates who have been released
- More state taxes rebated to local governments

Results of Questionnaires (continued)

Other comments/suggestions about state government budget issues:

- Government needs to stop give-aways to corporations locating in Kentucky. Many communities give big support benefits to international corporations for a few jobs they will bring – car and mining corporations plus power operation companies like AEP.
- Revamp Kentucky’s tax code. Tax Internet sales.
- More education for our legislators to make more informed decisions on our behalf.
- More public input, studies, forums need to be conducted.
- Need to raise retirement eligibility ages and years of service – need to reduce costs. Too many people are eligible to retire and it costs younger generations too much money.
- Increase incentives for corporate and manufacturing business locations in Kentucky.
- Privatize services.
- State mandated programs MUST be funded by the legislature.
- More equitable payments for travel allowances based on actual necessary travel miles.
- More efficacious use of time in Frankfort, less special sessions or regular yearly sessions.
- Combine counties and lessen operating costs.
- Cut spending when it comes to prisons – reform prisons!
- Increase sales tax.
- Make prisons self-sufficient.
- Release inmates who are not violent. Rehab the drug offenders and see that jobs are created, for those who have done their time and have gone through the SAP program successfully can be as they were in prison (successful) on the outside. Remember we’re not talking about a sex offender either. In my opinion, they are violent! They ruin too many lives as it is.
- Eliminate overspending in the school systems.
- If you retire at a job with a six-figure salary, that should be enough. Don’t jump from state to state and bleed the taxpayers.
- We need jobs for all people who want to work. That’s the answer to the economy. Without jobs, how are we going to pay for any taxes? A lot of us don’t want a handout. We would like to make an honest living.
- On the tobacco tax: enough is enough.
- Taxes on services should be limited, should not include medical/financial.
- I support a restaurant tax if one percent could stay local.
- On taxing the wealthy: They will figure out how not to pay unless it is a flat tax across the board.
- Need to evaluate the merits of community and technical colleges and our public universities.

Forum Analysis

Prior to this forum, did you consider yourself	(check one)
...well informed about state government budget issues and choices	12%
...somewhat informed about state government budget issues and choices	67%
...not very informed about state government budget issues and choices	17%

As a result of your participation in this forum on the state budget, do you now consider yourself	(check one)
...better informed	96%
...about as informed as before	–
...less informed	–

Forum Analysis (continued)

Did the forum present balanced points of view?	(check one)
Yes	96%
No	–

Was information presented in a clear and understandable manner?	(check one)
Yes	96%
No	–

Did the forum help you come to judgment about state government budget issues and choices?	(check one)
Yes	79%
No	17%

Was the discussion format effective?	(check one)
Yes	79%
Somewhat	12%
No	–

Do you feel that it is important for citizens to express their views about the state government budget?	(check one)
Yes	96%
No	–

Would you recommend that others participate in a similar forum?	(check one)
Yes	96%
No	–

Other comments/suggestions about the forum:

- A microphone for speakers in groups
- Thanks for dinner – wasn't necessary, but considering length of meeting it was nice to have. Snacks would have been fine.
- This forum would be a good exercise to put before youth groups – educate them on the issues, get their feedback on solutions and concerns.
- Great thing for debate teams, groups
- Adapt to high school class.
- Could not hear over heating system.
- Tables too strung out, maybe a layout that would enhance being able to hear all tables was possible.
- Good to see that others are interested in improving state government. Maybe that will encourage gathering of folks to raise a unified voice for specific changes such as NECESSARY re-working of TAX STRUCTURE at state level.
- The forum was an eye-opener. I feel we need to be more informed and have more say in our government. State as well as federal. The persons we elect should vote for the majority and take less from some lobbyist. Sometimes it would be better to just listen and vote the way the average person wants. The state could save more money, with less influence from some lobbyist (because of a special interest!)



“We the People” II

You can help shape the event

If you were among the 650 participants of the “We the People” AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting® in November 2007, the impact of that special day has likely stayed with you. It was an unprecedented community gathering of people from all walks of life and all areas of Owensboro-Daviess County who devoted an entire Saturday to examine vital challenges and opportunities facing our community.

We are gearing up from another major town meeting in 2010. Through the underwriting support of John Hager and the management assistance of the Public Life Foundation, in the coming weeks we will begin recruiting volunteers to serve on the committees needed to produce a first-rate event comparable to the first town meeting. We want “We the People” II to be even more successful than the 2007 event.

We invite you to be involved. We will be forming a ...

- Steering Committee
 - Program Development Committee
 - Outreach Committee
 - Marketing Committee
 - Fundraising Committee
 - Volunteer Recruitment/Training Committee
- ... and more!

Do you have special interests or talents that could be useful to the project?

If you are interested in participating, contact:

Shelly Nichols

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