

2008 CANDIDATE FORUM

sponsored by

**OLDE TOWNE DAPHNE ASSOCIATION
AND
THE EASTERN SHORE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Ernest Berger

E. Harry Brown

Fred Small
Incumbent

COUNCIL CANDIDATES

DISTRICT 1

Bailey Yelding Jr.
Incumbent

DISTRICT 3

John Lake
Incumbent
Pina Witherington

DISTRICT 5

William "Willie" Robinson
Ronald "Ron" Scott
Incumbent

DISTRICT 2

Cathy Barnette
Incumbent
Kathy Ebbitt

DISTRICT 4

Greg Burnam
Incumbent
Gary Reyes

DISTRICT 6

Derek Boulware
Eric Nager
Incumbent

DISTRICT 7

August A. Palumbo
Incumbent

Questions for Mayoral Candidates :

- (1) What leadership skills does the mayor need to work effectively between city staff, citizens and the Council to insure that Daphne grows responsibly?*
- (2) Citizens are concerned about the disappearance of green space and the increase in signage throughout the city. What do you feel is the right balance to maintain growth as well as the citizens' desire to maintain the charm of Daphne?*
- (3) Daphne's continued growth requires increased services in, and adjacent to, the city limits. How do you intend to fund those services?*
- (4) What are the two most important issues facing the City over the next four years?*

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

1. What leadership skills does the mayor need to work effectively between city staff, citizens and the Council to insure that Daphne grows responsibly?

Ernest Berger: THE MAYOR MUST HAVE THE SAME SKILLS ON DAY ONE AS A GREAT SEC COACH. He must quickly assess his team and determine strengths and development needs. He must begin to recruit top talent to address gaps. He must inspire, develop and occasionally prop up a team member. He must build and train to a balanced strategy and detailed supporting play book. He must maintain the confidence, support and contributions of his alumni base without giving them control of the team! He must be aware of competing teams, and gather his intelligence in an honest and ethical manner. Finally, he must represent the team to the media with equal amounts of enthusiasm and candor. Beginning day 1 and every day of his administration he must ask himself, "What would Nick, Tubbs, Mark, Les, Sylvester, and Steve do? Try it! It is a great way to evaluate your future mayor.

E. Harry Brown: The Mayor, as chief administrative officer of the city, should be able to communicate with the city work force, citizens, the media, and members of other governments and governmental agencies. He or She must have a general knowledge of the Alabama Code as it pertains to municipalities, bid laws, and all federal and state laws concerning human resources. A mayor having experience and knowledge of road building and drainage installation and repair is a plus. It is very necessary that the mayor be able to formulate and present a balanced budget.

Fred Small: First and foremost the Mayor will have to be open minded and a team player. The Mayor will have to have a presents of being able to satisfy the customers because that's what the citizens of Daphne are they are our customers. The Mayor will have to be well versed in negotiations to have the ability to work with the large land owners and developers to look out for the Cities best interest as we grow. To have the ability to work with and keep the trust with our sisters cities, counties, and state officials and continue looking and considering The City of Daphne's ability to work as a region. Lastly the Mayor will have to be a real person that knows the people in the community a person they can trust to make the best decision for the City of Daphne not just for special interest' while not leaving out the community as a whole.

2. Citizens are concerned about the disappearance of green space and the increase in signage throughout the city. What do you feel is the right balance to maintain growth as well as the citizens' desire to maintain the charm of Daphne?

Ernest Berger: The balance point(s) between green and neon must be determined by community-wide participation in our visioning and strategic planning processes. *I believe we need to view signage as part of a solution and not as a problem in and of itself.* No one style of signage can cover a city as diverse as Daphne. It can vary from carved olde world signage art (in many cities, the signage itself is an incentive for visitors to come and spend the day) to the most modern hi-tech signage in "big box" retail locations. We can not continue to approach signage as a business by business battle ground. Other cities have successfully addressed this issue. Who are they and what have they done right.....and wrong?

E. Harry Brown: It is very important that we maintain the ambiance and beauty of our city by using the beautification committee, the land use ordinance, and the long range plan as guides to help us retain as much green space as possible as our city continues to grow. We should re-visit the sign ordinance so that it is fair for all merchants and consistent throughout the city. There will definitely be a challenge to raise revenues to operate the city as a business and maintain the beautification projects that are in progress and projected by the city and beautification committee.

Fred Small: We have no option but to find that fine line between commerce and aesthetics. To continue working on our comprehensive plan to insure that we are retaining our green space but look at ways to have connect ability to green space thru out the city. With the rise in fuel prices we need to look at ways for the citizens having safe ways to use alternant means of transportation such as biking and golf carts by the means of connectivity.

2. Daphne's continued growth requires increased services in, and adjacent to, the city limits. How do you intend to fund those services?

Ernest Berger: Again, Daphne cries out for a vision and a supporting strategic plan just like a floundering football team. Our existing comprehensive plan is neither comprehensive nor current. As one example, we must address potential zoning and density decisions in the 181 corridor, before we can even begin to assess and plan for the cost of increased services. As we currently operate, we can only "guess-to-mate" the impact of growth by annexation. Regarding usage fees, we must be extremely careful in applying fees during the current recession in building, particularly on affordable housing below \$200,000. It is an issue we must determine based on facts and not emotions in an open decision making process. Taxation is a "Blunt Instrument" for generating municipal revenue. It must be approached very cautiously and in a totally objective manner.

E. Harry Brown: We will need to continue the growth of the retail sector of our economy to have the funds to provide needed services that citizens can't provide for themselves. The Alabama Code prohibits municipal funds being spent outside the city limits, unless the city police jurisdiction and the extra-territorial planning jurisdiction are active. If so, spending is limited to public safety activities or sub-division roads, drainage, and utilities approval. Alabama law allows collection of one-half the sales tax percentages collected by the city within the city limits to be spent on public safety issues in the police jurisdiction.

Fred Small: At some point and time the Council will need to adopt impact fees. This will allow us the continuing ability not only to continue the services we so much demand but enhance them. We must look at ways to work more efficiently to stretch dollars, while still giving a quality product.

3. What are the two most important issues facing the City over the next four years?

Ernest Berger: We must establish (please note, I did not say RE-establish) real fiscal discipline throughout our city government. Our annual municipal budget must be properly constructed and reviewed, and readily available and transparent to our council members and citizens. As your mayor, I intend to post quarterly revenue and cost results and 6 and 12 month projections every quarter at City Hall and on our website. In addition, I will report on our performance to strategic plan goal and the budget at our State of the City Address every year beginning in 2009.

We must unlock the incredible potential of our city staff and volunteers. Resulting productivity and content gains have huge positive upside. Employees and volunteers must have control, ownership and pride in their work, and a real place at the table as we govern our city. We must look at new and creative ways to serve our citizens (our citizens are OUR CUSTOMERS) while enhancing the productivity and creativity of our team. Within four years, our team will say with pride, "I work with the City of Daphne to serve our citizens!" This is possible and is already demonstrated every day by the outstanding team at Daphne Utilities.

E. Harry Brown: With the downturn in the economy, it is very important that we stabilize our revenues and spending, so that we can continue to provide services and maintain our quality of life. Growth is very demanding on services and revenue; therefore, we must encourage the use of green spaces and types of growth in Daphne that are less demanding on services. The two most important issues to me are Financial Stability and Growth Management. These two issues used correctly will enable us to continue to enjoy the quality of life we now have in Daphne.

Fred Small: One of the first things is the fine line between commerce and aesthetics with this said we need to do all we can to help all our businesses in Daphne to be successful, because without them we have nothing. We need to take a hard look at moving the City Limits further to the east to insure the commerce that will come on HWY 181.

Questions for Council Candidates:

- (1) What do you think are the two most important issues facing your district and what would you about them?*
- (2) Citizens are concerned about the disappearance of green space and the increase in signage throughout the city. What do you feel is the right balance to maintain growth as well as the citizens' desire to maintain the charm of Daphne?*
- (3) Daphne's continued growth, requires increased services in, and adjacent to, the city limits. How do you think the City should address these increasing needs?*

COUNCIL CANDIDATES

1. What do you think are the two most important issues facing your district and what would you about them?

DISTRICT 1

Bailey Yelding, Jr. *Not participating in the forum*

DISTRICT 2

Cathy Barnette: (1) The most important issue facing District 2 is the unmanned Fire Station behind City Hall! We, as Councilpersons, are elected to promote the health, safety and welfare of Daphne residents. Fire protection is one of our most basic City services! Emergency calls (fire and medic) serving Districts #1 and #2 come from the Fire Station on North Main Street. Average response times for other Districts are 3 minutes but 6 minutes for Districts #1 and #2!

In addition, we have 2 firefighters per truck while the National Standard recommends 5 with 4 considered "acceptable".

This is not a criticism of our firefighters! The City should provide our firefighters with the tools and personnel necessary for them to properly serve our community.

(2) District 2 is the heart of Daphne. We must preserve our heritage and character by supporting Olde Towne re-development efforts, promoting smart growth and maintaining and revitalizing our bay accesses.

Kathy Ebbitt: Two difficult issues facing District 2 in Daphne are: One, to address future expansion and secondly, to preserve our culture of friendliness and sense of small town community. These are overall city goals as well but district objectives must tie in also. Revitalizing the downtown area, repairing roads, and determining usage of undeveloped spaces are a few issues needing attention realizing financial support comes from revenues in which the entire City relies.

Daphne will be developing strategic and vision plans to balance direction. Leaders must ensure plans include all resident's needs from interest groups to individual concerns incorporating quality living for all. Interest groups bring passion to their causes. Passion turned into positive approaches prioritizing, compromising and communicating will result in workable solutions. We can't isolate Daphne. That would stifle growth as communities surrounding continue expanding. Our people's input must guide leadership throughout planning processes to maintain and preserve commonalities.

DISTRICT 3

John Lake: Traffic Congestion: We in Daphne need to address this and work to get alternative forms of transportation. This could be bikes, walking trails and mass transportation. We also need to instill a sense of community in Daphne, not a "we" or "them" mentality. Daphne citizens should understand that if one area is allowed to degrade, all of the city will be less for it. The roads, the parks, the library and public protection and safety are all important. If we don't feel safe, we are not safe!

Pina Witherington: First of all, I would check with our Police Department and see what the status of our crime rate is and see what measures need to be taken to reduce it, if need be. From what I hear from our citizens, our crime rate is not too high.

Next, I would address the sewer system and try to find out when the rest of Daphne will be getting connected to sewer. Personally, we requested gravity, and that is what we expect to receive. I would consider making a recommendation, in the form of a resolution that the rest of the people who have not been connected to sewer be exempt from the "tap in fee".

I am also concerned about more sidewalks for the city.

DISTRICT 4

Greg Burnam: *Not participating in the forum*

Gary Reyes: (1) The number one complaint that I have heard from residents in my district is the lack of police presence and the rise in crime specifically home related robberies. As Daphne continues to grow and as the city continues to annex certain properties we must be able to set aside funds to increase police protection and to decrease crime. The presence and the roaming of police patrols has proven in the past to be a deterrent and this action will reduce crime.

(2) The second issue will be the enormous development of subdivisions that realistically would trap residents within their subdivisions in case of an evacuation. Most of these subdivisions are designed with only one entrance and exit. These subdivisions are so large that they are taking up all of our green space. By increasing the number of subdivisions it also increases heat that is generated by all of the concrete and asphalt. So realistically asphalt has taken the place of open fields and open fields reduce heat.

DISTRICT 5

William "Willie" Robison: (1) Four years ago I stated "the finances of the city and resurfacing the streets and maintaining them after resurfacing" were the two main issues facing District 5. Today we are still faced with these issues. The infrastructure (paving) needs immediate attention. The city must have a plan and follow through with it-to set aside funds to make sure the work is done.

This fiscal year, \$500,000 was in the capitol budget for resurfacing, and only about \$330,000 was spent leaving a shortfall of \$170,000. "I will be the squeaky wheel to push for the remaining \$170,00 to continue the paving in Lake Forest." Not only will I push for the remaining dollars to be used, but continue to seek additional funds to finish project.

(2) City finances are a great concern for the voters in District 5. At the present rate of revenue, we are on course to have a deficit of about \$800,000. Where will the money comes from to make up the deficit? **THE CITY RESERVE FUND.** Still true today, with the loss in sales tax revenue, along with other expenditures rising, we need to be fiscally responsible with the taxpayer's money.

We need to set a plan in motion: a priority listing of things needing immediate attention, i.e. additional fire protection, resurfacing issues, etc. and lesser important issues.

Ronald "Ron" Scott: The infrastructures in District 5 have had more attention than other areas in District 5 have had more attention than other areas in Lake Forest but still more improvements need to be scheduled and work begun as soon as possible to address the major road system in District 5 (Ridgewood and Bay View among others) and the continued siltation of the Lake Forest. Secondly, we need to address our lack of sufficient recreational facilities. We have taken the first step in accruing the land to create a first class recreational park, but now is the time to move forward for completion of the project.

DISTRICT 6

Derek Boulware: (1) Road Resurfacing. Make sure that our tax dollars are being budgeted to resurface the roads in Lake Forest. (2) Protect our property Values.

Work with the mayor and city council to properly enforce our city codes especially as they pertain to the safety and well maintained image of our community.

Eric Nager: The two most important issues to District 6 are basic city services, like paving the roads of Lake Forest, and managing growth smartly for Daphne. I serve on the Finance Committee and what I'd do is help manage our finances such that we control spending and not budget to spend every dollar we take in. One of my proposals is to establish a "rainy day" fund over and above our required reserve to create a cushion in time of economic downturn as we have now. Then when we pave streets, money will be there without having to dip into the reserve and hurt our bond rating.

For managing growth, I propose partnering with our sister cities, who face the same challenges, and partnering with our businesses, who have already given smart growth some good strategic thinking. For more details on my proposals, please go to www.EricNager.com.

DISTRICT 7

August A. Palumbo: Development encroachment (including signage) & road resurfacing. I have fought re-zoning to broader commercial use and will continue to do so. Roads are our major immediate capital priority in my district as well as throughout the city.

2. Citizens are concerned about the disappearance of green space and the increase in signage throughout the city. What do you feel is the right balance to maintain growth as well as the citizens' desire to maintain the charm of Daphne?

DISTRICT 1

Bailey Yelding, Jr: *Not participating in the forum*

DISTRICT 2

Cathy Barnette: Governor Bob Riley addressed Eastern Shore leaders in July 2007. He highlighted the beauty and charm of the Eastern Shore and stated "The problem is not attracting new business, but maintaining the quality of life that makes the Eastern Shore attractive. Be highly selective in who your new neighbors are."

For the City of Daphne to heed his warning, it is imperative that we develop a clear, collective community vision about where we are going and follow that roadmap into the future. This includes the revision and implementation of long range plans and city ordinances, the evaluation of proposed growth and development, the identification of annexation goals and limits, and the creation of a green space plan.

The City has not developed a clear roadmap into the future and the citizens have not had much chance to provide input into the growth that has occurred!

Kathy Ebbitt: Being convinced the overwhelming majority of citizens residing here live here because of the beauty and charm, maintaining our green space and controlling signage is a priority of leaders now and the future. Having traveled the United States extensively has given me the opportunity to witness areas that have gotten this aspect correct and those that have failed. We are fortunate being separated by water from the largest City near us limiting encroachment from the West. Economic development efforts should involve partnerships with the city where incoming industry works to create business environments that are prosperous yet architecturally well planned in conjunction with the appearance of the communities. Research Triangle Park in North Carolina is an example of big business balancing with the beauty of the city. We might consider targeting cities and meeting with other leaders as to how they successfully created balance during growth periods

DISTRICT 3

John Lake: To enforce our sign ordinances and put all businesses on an equal playing field. When a business does not have to pay \$50,000 to build a sign, small and large businesses will be able to work to improve their appearances. We should give sign credits to businesses which have sculptures and water features or fountains. We should strictly enforce our landscape ordinances.

Pina Witherington: There are sign ordinances in place to accommodate businesses, minimizing visual clutter, but are we following the ordinances? We also have land use ordinance in place. The idea behind these ordinances is to maintain balance between progress and the unique charm of Daphne here on the Eastern Shore. We need to ensure that we follow these ordinances.

DISTRICT 4

Greg Burnam: *Not participating in the forum*

Gary Reyes: Citizens are concerned about the disappearance of green space and the increase in signage throughout the city. What do you feel is the right balance to maintain growth as well as the citizens' desire to maintain the charm of Daphne?

It is very important for us to continue to fight against those individuals or forces who feel that the green space is not important. In order for us to maintain the charm of Daphne we must preserve our beach areas because there will not be any additional beaches created. We must preserve our views of Mobile Bay as well as the public access to the Bay. The Bay must be protected from environmental hazards like fertilizer runoff that causes dead space in the water. Our children need places to play and our adults need places to walk and enjoy the outdoors.

We must continue to enforce a sign ordinance to insure that the beauty of the sky is not lost.

DISTRICT 5

William "Willie" Robison: (1) Actively involve the Beautification Committee members with the important decisions of the possibilities to think "outside the box," and suggestions for the continued upgraded improvements of the visions we all have for Daphne. We have the insight of these volunteering members expertise on this subject, and should take full advantage of what they have to say.

(2) Daphne's sign ordinance is not being enforced, therefore the City Council needs to take the lead and see that everyone comes into compliance under these ordinances.

Ronald "Ron" Scott: With one exception, I feel the planning commission has done a good job of containing the type of land uses in appropriate areas. The ultimate decision of course is the council's and for the one instance in question, I will take my part of the responsibility. As long as we keep the major commercial ventures to the I-10, Hwy 98, Hwy 90, Co. Rd 64, areas, the mixed use facilities in the proper overlay districts and maintain our monument sign requirements we should be able to maintain the current charm of Daphne.

DISTRICT 6

Derek Boulware: The right balance between well maintained growth in the city of Daphne and that of preserving the small town charm of our community can only come from proper planning.

A new comprehensive growth management plan for the city must be developed in order for both interests to be properly identified, respected and their needs addressed.

Eric Nager: The right balance is attracting more customers to our businesses along I-10 and having more green space in town. I know that several businesses located near I-10 feel there is inadequate signage, and that their customers deserve the opportunity to find them more easily. We can do a better job of signage near the Interstate without relying on billboards.

More green space goes back to basic city services by providing more and better recreational facilities and continuing to improve our Bay front property. The Council is already considering more ball parks and walking paths, and I support these. In order to continue such projects, we have to keep the revenues flowing. Sixty percent of our revenue comes from sales tax, so we have to be business-friendly, attract customers to our businesses, and attract businesses to locate here. One way to nurture this relationship is to reduce our business license tax.

DISTRICT 7

August A. Palumbo: I have vigorously fought expansion of signage during my term and will continue to oppose any attempts to relax our ordinances. Growth is coming with or without control and we must be vigilant to maintain what makes Daphne unique.

3. Daphne's continued growth, requires increased services in, and adjacent to, the city limits. How do you think the City should address these increasing needs?

DISTRICT 1

Bailey Yelding, Jr: *Not participating in the forum*

DISTRICT 2

Cathy Barnette: I can't begin to stress how important I believe the need is for a visioning plan and strategic plan for the City of Daphne! Through extensive public involvement, a visioning plan defines who Daphne wants to be in the future. A strategic plan is a planning document (typically for 3-5 years) which sets forth the action steps and timetable to accomplish that vision.

As Daphne continues to grow, we must evaluate the impacts and costs of proposed growth so that intelligent decisions can be made. There has been considerable discussion about expanding our borders to Hwy 181. Before any further action, we must research the City's ability to provide additional community services (sewer, police, fire, recreation, etc.) and fully understand both the benefits gained and the costs (and how those would be funded) involved.

Kathy Ebbitt: As needed services in our city and adjacent to other communities increase, now is time when unification with the surrounding cities in planning is imperative. Issues in zoning and annexation will be critical. Particularly in the areas of infrastructure, where costs can be shared, and where resolutions have to make sense will require overlapping plans to result in cohesiveness. Opportunities in higher education for adult learners need to be addressed to remain competitive in areas of economic development. Daphne leaders must ensure that growth is equitable and that the majority of services aren't in outlying areas for our residents. Daphne doesn't want to become the most beautiful place to drive through to get to another place. It takes revenues to stay green and beautiful as well as competitive. We must provide fair and equitable initiatives, by teaming up with other Eastern Shore communities. Our actions must be proactive, not reactive.

DISTRICT 3

John Lake: Work with our neighbors to the south and north and also with the County to establish a unified approach to development. Let developers know that they cannot play one off against the other. We should also look at a County wide approach to "impact fees" that would go to address growth issues.

Pina Witherington: What are the City's needs and wants? There is a difference! Look at the budget with the understanding that the needs should come first!

DISTRICT 4

Greg Burnam: *Not participating in the forum*

Gary Reyes: The city of Daphne needs to have a 5 – 10 year projection of what areas will be developed for residential and which for commercial properties. The revenues generated from those commercial properties have to be enough to afford the growth and the needed services. At some point Daphne has to catch up with the amount of growth already experienced and the services that are needed for that growth.

DISTRICT 5

William "Willie" Robison: As Daphne's tremendous growth continues, we must give serious consideration to perhaps having a moratorium on annexation as this strains the manpower, services and finances of the city. The City needs to deeply study future annexations more thoroughly and the effects they have on the above.

Ronald "Ron" Scott: Market conditions have greatly slowed the city's growth over the past 12 months. Although all forecasts indicate renewed growth both inside and outside the City limits. We may have to decide between exercising our powers in the extra territorial areas in order to continue to provide certain services at current fee (many for no fee) levels or charging for services to non-city residents.

DISTRICT 6

Derek Boulware: Well developed and organized planning is the only correct way to properly address the issues of our city.

Eric Nager: One way the city should not address these needs is through increased taxes. For example I am opposed to the proposed impact tax on new development. I've brought economic analysis to the discussion to illustrate what a new family moving into Daphne spends in a year, and how that money is multiplied through the economy. Such natural spending pays back what Daphne would receive in an impact tax within a couple of years without alienating newcomers. I believe that a "rising tide lifts all boats." In the case of Daphne, we are poised to reap great gains in our sales tax revenue as the economy recovers. If we manage this wisely, and focus on basic city services, coordinating with our neighbor cities and private groups such as the Friends of the Library and the Volunteer Firefighters as we go, we will expand our services without burdening the taxpayer.

DISTRICT 7

August A. Palumbo: Daphne services are second to none in Baldwin County. Fiscal conservatism and budget scrutiny can maximize the current and future revenue sources (sales, ad valorem taxes) to keep up with increased demand without raising taxes.

2008 Candidate Forum

*Daphne Civic Center
August 5, 2008*

*Jubilee Springs water provided by Daphne Utilities
Ferns provided by Hazels, HWY 98, Daphne*

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