



## KEY PARTS OF RATE HIKE REQUEST DENIED

STORY, A5

# PSL faces 'extremely painful' decisions

Don Cooper warns Council it will have to decide between raising taxes or cutting staff, services

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**PORT ST. LUCIE** — As the city enters into the 2010 budget year, the City Council will face "extremely painful" decisions and will have to decide between raising property taxes, cutting personnel or reducing services, former City Manager Don Cooper warned the council three days before his Friday departure.

Preparing the council for a rough economic climate in which he believes could continue throughout the decade, Cooper in a six-page Jan. 5 memo to the City Council, said the budget will be the single biggest issue with continued declining property values and loss in revenues. The city shouldn't rely on help from the state or St. Lucie County as those governments deal with their own financial problems, Cooper noted.

"The financial environment will be further complicated not only by the difficulties as it applies to the assessed valuation, union negotiations, legislation by the state Legislature but also the confluence of an election year, which will bring about a large number of promises to reduce the budget, salaries and taxes without the corresponding reduction in service levels," Cooper wrote. "Although this may make good politics,

SEE DECISIONS, PAGE A6

# Haiti at 'the center of world's thoughts'



Jim Stewart of Missionary Flights International helps load water purification kits into a DC-3 aircraft at the St. Lucie County International Airport in Fort Pierce before leaving for Haiti on Wednesday. Missionary Flights International is ferrying supplies and passengers to Port-au-Prince to assist in response to Tuesday's earthquake in Haiti.

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JORGE CRUZ • The Associated Press  
Injured people sit along Delmas Road the day after an earthquake struck Haiti.

From wire reports

President Barack Obama dispatched military troops and an air and sea flotilla to speed earthquake relief to Haiti on Wednesday, and governments from China to Venezuela rushed to help with aid and rescue workers. Obama said the world's help was critical to deal with a "cruel and incomprehensible" tragedy.

The massive effort to alleviate the toll of death and destruction kicked in as the devastation from Tuesday's magnitude-7.0 quake revealed itself. Haitian officials predicted a death total of staggering proportions.

"Haiti has moved to the center of the world's thoughts and the world's compassion," British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said.

**RELATIVES:** Treasure Coast Haitians worry about friends, family. **A7**

**MISSIONS:** Treasure Coast groups involved in Haiti relief effort. **A7**

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• **Opinion:** Treasure Coast residents anxiously await word from family in Haiti. **A8**

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• What Treasure Coast lawmakers had to say. **A10**  
• For more coverage, go to **TCPalm.com**.

# Put away the scarves and get a head start on honoring MLK in PSL

Come out, come out. The Treasure Coast's big chill is behind us and seasonal temperatures (highs in the 70s and lows in the 50s and 60s) are forecast for the weekend. So pack up the parkas and scrap the scarves; it's time to get back out to the events that make the high season here so much fun.



**TYLER TREADWAY**  
WHAT A WEEKEND

because of the state's subtropical growing climate. Rather than plant a tree, Heathcote Botanical Gardens will commemorate Florida Arbor Day with an Eco-Volunteer Fair to plant people in positions that serve the environment year-round. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, representatives

from Treasure Coast agencies that need volunteers will be at the garden, 210 Savannah Road in Fort Pierce, to talk about their missions and how volunteers can help. For information, call (772) 464-4672 or go to [heathcotebotanicalgardens.org](http://heathcotebotanicalgardens.org).

**START MLK DAY EARLY**

Also getting a head-start on a holiday, Port St. Lucie's Parks and Recreation Department will sponsor Family Fun Day from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday at Whispering Pines Park, 800 S.W. Darwin Blvd.,

in advance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Festivities will include a step performance; a talent show for all ages, bounce houses, children's activities, basketball games and food vendors. Admission is free. To play basketball, call Demetris Collins at (772) 344-4300. For other information, call (772) 878-2277.

**BREWS YOU CAN USE**

Now that the weather's warmed back up a bit, wouldn't a nice, cold beer hit the spot? Maybe more than one? You can try out more

than 100 types of craft brews at the second annual Winter Beer Festival from 3 to 8 p.m. Saturday at Tradition Field, 525 N.W. Peacock Blvd. in Port St. Lucie. Besides beer (as if you really need anything besides beer), there'll be live music by the 5/4's, Boss Groove and Monkey Bones, food vendors and arts and crafts. Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. For information, call (772) 871-2115.

MORE EVENTS, A6

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