

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Debbie Renner, City Clerk
DATE: March 24, 2009
SUBJECT: **Responding to Public Records Requests**

PURPOSE

At the March 10th Council Meeting, Council Member Abraham requested during the “New Business” portion of the agenda that a discussion be initiated regarding the City’s practices in responding to public records requests. Public records requests are statutorily governed in Chapter 119, F.S. Chapter 119 is available on line at www.flsenate.gov or I have copies available in my office for review or copying upon request.

Council Member Abraham asked that an article that appeared in the News Journal on March 18th which discusses the Sunshine Laws be included with this agenda item.

Local

SECTION C

WEDNESDAY
MARCH 18, 2009

THE NEWS-JOURNAL

WEST VOLUSIA EDITION: NEWS FROM YOUR COMMUNITY AND YOUR STATE

LEGISLATURE 2009

New site shows tax spending

By JIM SAUNDERS
TALLAHASSEE BUREAU CHIEF

Follow the three most-important words when trying to figure out what government does.

So, with Florida in the midst of its annual Sunshine Week, Gov. Charlie Crist and state Chief Financial Officer Alex

Public can see financial details online

Sink unveiled an Internet site Tuesday that will allow Floridians to see who is getting state tax dollars—and how much.

Similarly, Rep. Dorothy Hukill, R-Port Orange, started moving forward with a bill that would allow the public to go online and drill into the details of the state budget and finances. Eventually, Hukill's bill also

could allow taxpayers to easily look at how cities, counties and other local agencies are receiving and spending money.

Crist said he wants to give people a "better window into their government." He and Hukill said that is particularly important during tough economic times. "People need to know that

their hard-earned dollars are being spent wisely," Hukill told the House Government Accountability Act Council before it voted unanimously for her bill.

Crist and Sink held a news conference to announce creation of the site that allows the public to type in names of government vendors and find information such as how much they

have been paid and the dates of the payments.

Information on the site, flgov.com/sunshinespending, will be updated nightly.

"You can know in real-time where the money is going," Sink said.

The announcement came as Florida marks Sunshine Week.

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MORE ONLINE: Find out more about the program. Follow the link: news-journalonline.com

SITE

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which is designed to draw attention to the state's open-government laws.

Barbara Petersen, president of the Tallahassee-based First Amendment Foundation, called the site a "great first step." But she also urged law-

makers to make sure similar information becomes available for local governments.

"This gets to the heart of the purpose of open-government laws: What



PETERSEN

are they doing with our money?" said Petersen, who served as chairwoman of an open-government commission appointed by Crist.

Hukill's bill would allow the public to get detailed information about items in the state budget. They could use computer links, for example, to track how much money had been spent from a specific budget item, who received the money and the dates of the payments.

The bill also would set up a process that could gradually lead to local governments providing similar information. Ultimately, Hukill said, she would like to see a "real-time checkbook online."

DATE: 3/18/2009
CC: MAYOR/COUNCIL