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Gil Ziffer: Freeze fees and give business a break

Gil Ziffer • My View • February 17, 2010

Jobs, jobs, jobs.

One can hardly turn on the news and not hear about jobs summits, jobs bills, job fairs ... anything and everything related to helping kick-start our economy.

Good.

In these tough times, with so many people out of work, we need to do what we can, to help put people back to work.

We also hear a lot about governments tightening their collective belts and making do with limited resources in a tight budget year.

Also, good. At times not easy, but good.

With our economy struggling and with the honest recognition that we in Tallahassee are not immune from the current down cycle, I want to propose taking a step in the right direction for our city.

As a small-business owner, I know that locally owned businesses in our community are feeling the pinch. I also know that these businesses pay millions in fees on everything from electrical connection fees to compliance certificates, from environmental permit fees to fees to put up a road sign.

There are very good reasons for these fees, and they help pay for the cost of running our city at the level our citizens have come to expect. I also know that raising these fees is sometimes necessary to offset the rising costs of providing a service. But in these tough times, small and locally owned businesses need more predictability and relief from the ever-increasing costs of offering needed services.

For these reasons, I am proposing a two-year freeze on many of these fees. We don't need increases on any fees that might hinder job growth or job creation. No increases on the dozens of fees that we charge businesses for everything from putting on

an addition to issuing a new license.

At a time when all levels of government are taking extra steps to create jobs and to help small businesses get through these tough times, this seems a good step for us to take on behalf of those who are in the job-creation business. I know that our city has undergone some transformative reductions in cost and that we have cut our expenses significantly, but there's more to do.

As I look around our community, talk with friends and business associates and read statistics showing that most new jobs come at the hands of small and locally owned businesses, I know we must do everything we can to assist. I also know that we at City Hall will have to go through another round of belt-tightening.

And we will succeed at both ends.

Our community is strong, and we are resilient. The city staff is truly committed to excellent service with an eye toward keeping costs low. Likewise, our local business owners are smart, determined and resourceful. That is why I have every confidence that we can work hand-in-hand and side-by-side to not only survive but thrive as we emerge from these tough times. To be sure, this is not a cure-all. But it is a good small step that we can take to help grow jobs in our local community.

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Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

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