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Print exclusive: Are commissioners spending too much?

By Jeff Burlew • SENIOR GOVERNMENT EDITOR •
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Over the past four and a half years — as the city of Tallahassee cut programs and laid off workers — the Mayor's Office spent \$98,281 on travel.

During the same time period — as Leon County cut library hours and enacted a hiring freeze — the County Commission spent nearly \$48,360 on food for commissioners and staff during commission meetings.

The commissioners' spending is in addition to perks they receive beyond their salaries, such as car and cell phone allowances, and in addition to budgets for running their offices.

Paul Thielen, corporate compliance director for Herdt Consulting Inc., said his company, which does technology consulting for the U.S. Department of Defense, has cut expenses in all categories.

"They have to operate the commission, particularly their personal-expense aspects of the commission, the same way my company and every other company has to operate in hard economic times," he said.

The biggest spender was Mayor John Marks, whose office spent \$165,059 — \$98,281 on travel; \$17,783 on memberships and \$5,066 on food outside of commission meetings and travel. The

remainder included expenditures for copying, telephone charges and other office supplies.

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