

Headline: Hammond sees rise in sales tax revenue
Date: 5/5/2010 12:00:00 AM
Media Contact:
Media Outlet: WBRZ-TV - Online
Attachment Link: http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/livingston_tangipahoa/92836579.html

HAMMOND — City sales tax collections during March were up by about \$44,000 over the same month last year, marking the second consecutive month that sales tax revenue gone up.

The City Council learned Tuesday that the 3.1 percent increase in sales tax revenue over March 2009 reverses a trend of declining sales tax receipts dating back to late 2006.

While a few small increases in monthly sales tax collections over the same month for the previous year were noted during that stretch, income from this source had been steadily declining.

In announcing the March figures, Mayor Mayson Foster said: “We are so very pleasantly surprised ... in fact, we are real excited. We don’t know where the money is coming from, but we are certainly grateful, and relieved. The hotels and restaurants are all doing great, and I think that we are in the right place at the right time.”

Sales tax collections in March were \$1.439 million. Receipts for February were at the same level for that period the previous year.

Foster said if these numbers continue, then the city’s sales tax receipts might be in line with what has been budgeted.

However, the mayor told the council that he is now working on the 2010-11 budget for the coming fiscal year that begins July 1 and declared that he would propose a “standstill budget.”

Foster said that funding the retirement plans for the city’s policemen and firemen would be increased this year and that the city would have to find between \$800,000 and \$1 million just to satisfy requirements of the retirement programs.

In a related matter, the City Council unanimously approved the city’s millage rates for fiscal year 2010. The rates will stay at their current levels, said Jennie Wilson, the city’s revenue and permits director.

The 21.04-mill assessments are distributed among public works, 2 mills; the general fund, 9.04 mills; and police and fire protection, 10 mills.

Foster said new businesses now opened in the renovated **Hammond Square Mall**, ad valorem taxes from the assessed millage will add about \$4 million to the city’s coffers during the coming fiscal year.