

## City status report from Denham Springs' Mayor Jimmy Durbin

By Helen Wale Turner

**Pete's Hwy/I-12 Interchange** – “Secretary of DOTD Sherry LeBas is very supportive of the Pete's Hwy./I-12 interchange. She has appointed in-house engineers, assigned duties and scheduled a meeting to get the project moving forward; we'll do everything we can to assist them. DOTD is getting ready to start the environmental impact study and other necessary preliminary studies required by the federal governments. We're still relying on our Congressional delegation to secure the remaining funding needed, and I think they're on board. If everything moves along as it should, the project could possibly be let in 2012-2013, and it's about an 18 month project, so by 2014-15 we could be driving on a new interchange. That's the most optimistic estimate, conditioned upon obtaining funding and relying on the state to get studies and acquisition rights-of-way. In decades to come, we'll see Pete's Hwy. four-laned from I-12 to Florida Ave.”

**Rushing Road three-laning** – “The plans for the three-laning of Rushing Rd. from Range Ave. to Beau Village have been finalized and submitted to DOTD on Oct 26. The money is in place to pay for it, and we have a cooperative agreement with DOTD for the city to pay about \$100,000 for the engineering.”

**Tate Rd. widening** – “The city

submitted the application for federal highway road money through the state for improving Tate Rd., and we've submitted the preliminary plans to the state. This is a \$5.5-\$6 million project that will be a 4 lanes boulevard. To line it up with Veterans Blvd., we'll take a small slice off the corners of the two bank properties on either side of Range Ave. We'll have to take out 5 structures between Range and Cooper St., and after Cooper, we'll veer north and take out a few structures on the north side of Tate. First, we have to get the project on the Metropolitan Region road program. Four 4 months ago the communities in the Baton Rouge metro region, including Denham Springs and Walker, were asked if they had any projects they wanted to submitted for 2012. I immediately took an application for Tate Rd. to our engineers and had them fill it in and submit in within 4-5 days We'll have to go through the same process of studies for environmental impact, wetlands, subsurface, infrastructure, etc. It will probably track the same time frame as the Pete's Hwy. interchange.”

**Sam's Club** – “Sam's Club sent engineers and architects to visit Oct.



Denham Springs Mayor Jimmy Durbin

21 with a punch list for information on building codes and other requirements to help them draw their final plans and specs to submit to the city and to the state fire marshal. They will likely advertise for bids – they're not required to but they do in order to get the best price - in March and award the contract to a contractor in late May or early June. We'll see a lot of work going on down there by

Bass Pro by mid-year 2011. The demographics show this location will be a very good store for them. Interestingly, Bass Pro is as anxious for them to get open as the public is because they buy most of their cleaning products, paper goods and other supplies from Sam's, and they're having to go to Baton Rouge to get their stuff.”

**Albertson's** – “The final agreement between the building's owner and Albertson's was signed Nov. 3, so Albertson's renovations inside and out will be getting underway soon. This will be only the second Albertson's in the nation to be opened under new owners since the company's reorganization, so you can see the confidence they have in the Denham Springs market. They should be open in early or

late spring.”

**Investars Bank** – “Their new bank here in Denham Springs will be their headquarters for the region, so it will be a big structure. Their architects are working on plans to submit to the city; I would guess that construction might begin by late December.


**Hotels** – We received the basic floor plan for two new hotels, the 5-story Fairfield Inn, next to the Hampton Inn on Rushing Rd., and the Holiday Inn on Range Ave. south of the Bass Pro Blvd. intersection. These hotels make the 9th and 10th hotels in Denham Springs. It's amazing to know that Denham Springs will have 10 hotels, but we have the restaurant base, the fuel base, Bass Pro and Wal-Mart, and Sam's Club and Juban Crossing are coming. Ten hotels will probably be the market limit, besides, we're running out of tracts of land large enough for a hotel near the Interstate interchange where hotels want to locate.”

**Downtown sidewalk project** – “The engineer thinks the replacement of the concrete sidewalks with brick pavers and with cut curbs for handicapped access should be completed by the end of Nov. - and doesn't it look beautiful. Most of Range Ave. is done, and the last phase is Mattie St.”

**Downtown parking lot next to Chandler's** – “The reconstruction of

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### A valuable business tool

It's just seven months after the launch of Apple's iPad, and I'm as excited as ever about this device as I continue to find new uses for it in my business arsenal of technology. Need to justify the purchase of an iPad?

This month I'll highlight

five different ways you can use the iPad as a business tool.

1. Presentation tool - The iPad has powerful options for displaying slideshows and presentations. There are many apps allowing for the editing and displaying of presentations, including a built-in slideshow option within the iPad itself. The iPad can even connect to a projector or monitor via adaptors to display a presentation to a large group of people.

2. Mobile computing - As mentioned in our previous article, the iPad is not a laptop replacement, but rather a device for media consumption and mobile computing. There are many productivity applications that you can utilize while on the go, including word processing, email and calendar syncing and many more.

3. Notepad and Planner - One of the most useful implementations for the iPad is its ability to serve as a note taker. The iPad makes taking and organizing notes in meetings a joy, and allows you to email notes instantly. The calendar, a standard feature of the iPad, mimics the

look and feel of a real planner. The sleek, beautiful interface design of both the notepad and calendar make using them intuitive and simple.

4. Documentation storage - The iPad can replace heavy folders and even huge boxes of documentation. Business professional on every level of the executive ladder can now carry as many necessary documents with them in one tiny package. This is invaluable when on the go or in front of a potential customer. You can even utilize cloud storage to quickly sync files across your desktop or laptop to your iPad and mobile devices.

5. Wow factor - The iPad is still seen as a cutting-edge device. First impressions are everything, and potential and existing customers will be wowed by your commitment to using the latest technology to drive your own business's efficiency. Plus they'll probably just think it's cool!

Hopefully the items above will give you ideas on how to apply the iPad to your business life. I chose to travel on several occasions this year without my laptop (a serious test for a technology guy) and have found the iPad a capable device that carried me through those times smoothly.

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### Talk of the Town, from p15

this parking lot between Range Ave. and Hummell St. is something we'll be looking at in 2011 and will evaluate in light of what the economy is at that time. We've approved the project and have the money set aside, but it's in our rainy day fund, and we may have to use it for other purposes. We will at least do a clean-up and facelift next year. We promised the merchants a complete redo of that lot, and we'll do it one day, and in 2011 if possible. This lot is important to the Antiques District, and it will enhance their business and, in turn, increase sales tax revenues from the area."

**Sanctuary Park** - "This mini-park next to Old City Hall is near completion and is even better than what I anticipated. It has benches, flagstone paths, a birdbath and beautiful landscaping. The antique-style lights are the most recent things to go in and they give the park a wonderful ambiance."

**Sales tax revenues** - "Sales tax revenues are coming in under what we estimated and budgeted. I'm not too pessimistic about this, as we'll see an increase in revenue during the holidays, and our expenditures are on budget."

**City sewer expansion** - "Citizens are starting to see work for the expansion of city sewer in different areas around town. Phases one will be Tate Rd. in Nov. Phase 2 will be the east side of Pete's Hwy. north of I-12, and from Eastover down to Wax Rd. and Greystone. With the development that will bring, Pete's Hwy. will become the next Range Ave. Phase 3 will be south of the Pete's Hwy. overpass down to Vincent Rd. and to Harris Rd. tracking Pete's Hwy. almost to Seventh Ward School. Phase 4 will be Harris Rd., south Plantation Estates, Henderson Rd. almost to 4-H Rd. Phase 5 will be along 4-H Rd. north of I-12 tracking Vincent Rd. to Range Ave. and south of Pirie Landing. Phase 6 will track 4-H down to Harrell's Ferry Landing and Pete's Hwy down to Hillon Hood Rd, and the Gray's Creek Elementary area. Almost everything drains into Gray's Creek, so this expansion will further improve our status with DEQ and EPA by enhancing Grays Creek instead of degrading it. Denham Springs is one of three cities in the state that DEQ refers people to go look at; once or twice a month we get out of town visitors at our state-of-the-art sewer collection plant. The water that's discharged is crystal clear and can't be distinguished from bottled water. All of these areas will be attractive for development because they will all have city water, gas and sewer."



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