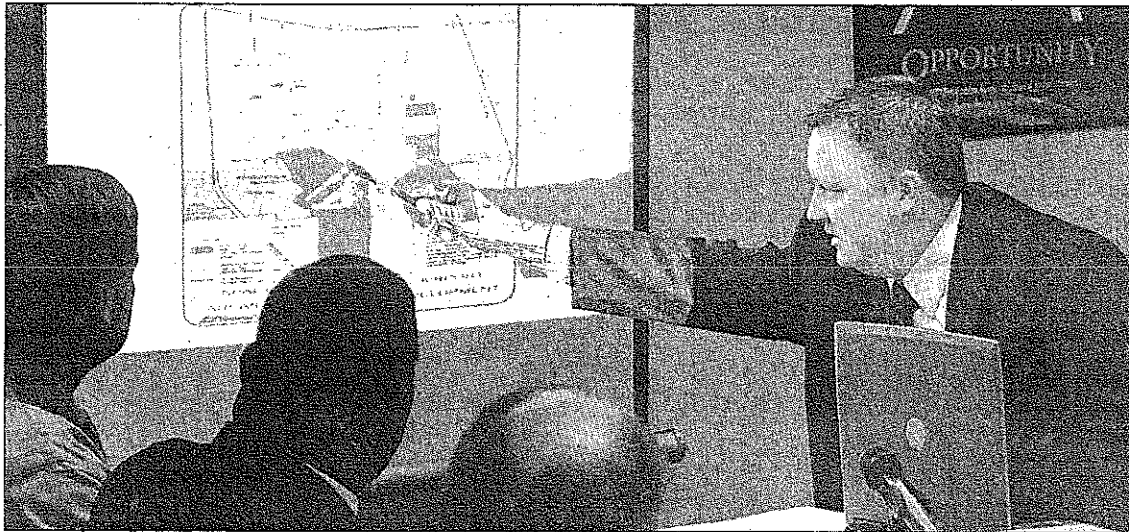


# FLORIDA TODAY

SERVING THE SPACE COAST

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2010 75 CENTS



Photos by Tim Shortt, FLORIDA TODAY

**Looking to the future.** Matt Chesnut, director of economic development in Titusville, discusses the impact of cuts at Kennedy Space Center during a meeting with FLORIDA TODAY this week.

# Deep impact

## Q&A

Plans for NASA would bring significant changes to the Space Coast, and Titusville is at the forefront

### Who participated?

- Bart Gaetjens, chairman, Titusville Chamber of Commerce board of directors
- Matt Chesnut, director, Titusville economic development
- Robin Fisher, county commissioner, District 1
- Mark Ryan, Titusville city manager
- Marcia Gaedcke, president, Titusville Chamber of Commerce
- Conrad Eigenmann, Titusville vice mayor

FLORIDA TODAY convened a group of Titusville area officials this week to discuss the impact of President Barack Obama's NASA budget on North Brevard. The shuttle program is set to end, resulting in the loss of 7,000 jobs at Kennedy Space Center. Obama's plan calls for the cancellation of the Constellation program. If approved by Congress, these cutbacks will ripple through the businesses and communities where shuttle workers shop, live and pay taxes.

The officials gathered were blunt about the challenges facing North Brevard. But they also expressed optimism that Titusville would use this opportunity to reinvent itself.

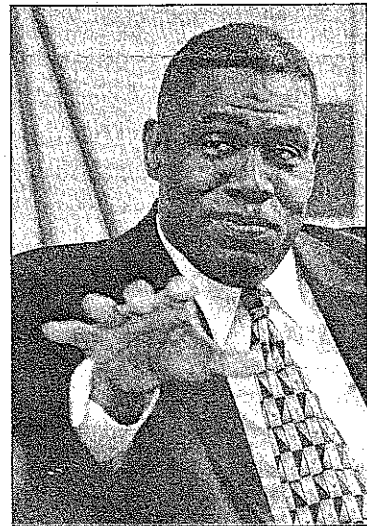
### QUESTION:

Describe how you see the current situation, particularly as it will affect Titusville?

### FISHER:

I think the uncertainty is scary for our community. We know we're going to be hit as hard as anybody with the job losses. I also think that whatever the end product is that we have to make sure we're in position to capitalize off that.

If human spaceflight is the way of the future, and it's going to be



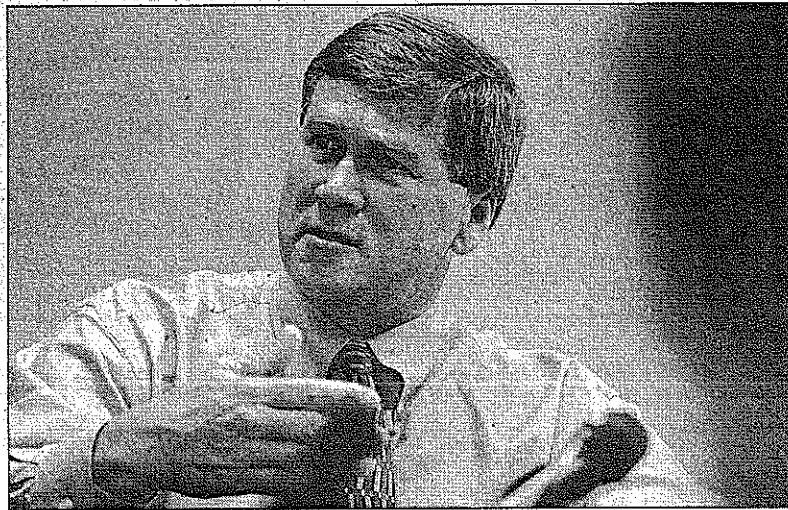
**The work force.** During the meeting with FLORIDA TODAY, Robin Fisher, the District 1 representative on the Brevard County Commission, addresses employment opportunities after the shuttle shutdown. "Jobs, jobs, jobs is the No. 1 priority," he said.

commercial, we need to make sure they launch out of Kennedy Space Center. . . . Everything's always been launched out of here, but not a whole lot's been manufactured out of here or developed out of here, and so this might be a time that, as the cards get reshuffled, some of that work will come out of here.

See IMPACT, 2A

# North Brevard 'not dark and dire'

FLORIDA TODAY

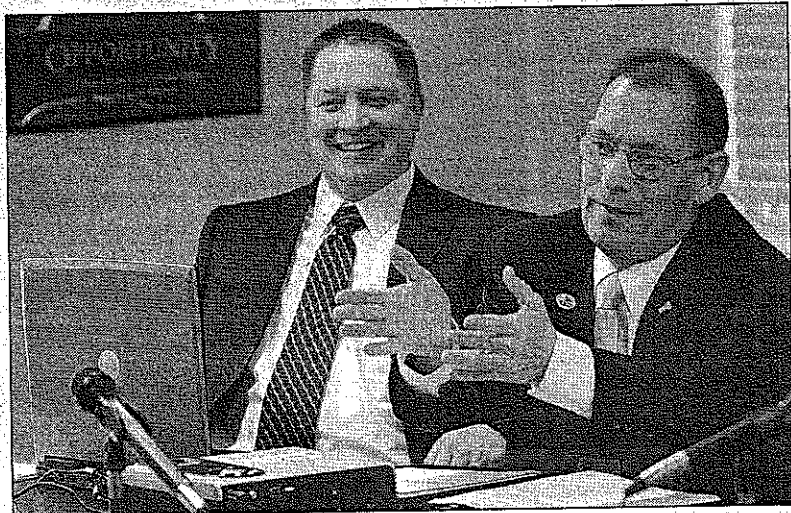


**Lower pay.** Titusville Vice Mayor Conrad Eigenmann said workers might have to accept lower-paying jobs. "I know 7,000 employees who would probably take a pay cut rather than lose their jobs," he said.

2A SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2010 ■

**Diversifying.** Matt Chesnut, left, director of Titusville economic development, listens to City Manager Mark Ryan talk about the need for the community to attract many small companies.

Photos by  
Tim Shortt,  
FLORIDA TODAY



**EIGENMANN:**

"Brevard County has been through a lot of layoffs and catastrophes and things that every time (we) overcome. Every time, a little bit of resiliency has come out of each one, and every time there has been a setback, we have come out stronger and stronger."

Some laid-off workers might have to accept lower pay, he said. Eigenmann, who owns an electrical contracting business, said an electrician typically makes \$15 to \$20 an hour, but that same employee would make \$36 an hour working at KSC.

"I know 7,000 employees who would probably take a pay cut rather than lose their jobs if they had a choice."

**RYAN:**

He talked about the need to attract new businesses. "We'd much prefer to bring 100 companies with 60 employees than to have the 6,000-employee company, and then five years from now they're gone. We want to create that diversity and not have the reliance on space."

**CHESNUT:**

Economic development officials also must help existing businesses. "Part of the job is to recruit, but also part of the job is to help the local businesses that are here grow and still be functional. Studies show about 70 percent of new jobs are created from existing companies."

**GAEDCKE:**

"Our real concern is Main Street: the guys who are going to see a reduction in their sales because household incomes are going to change.

"We've been researching the opportunities and trying to find models of other communities around the country who have gone through similar instances. . . . We're finding that a lot of cities didn't make the correlation between major industry shutting down or drastic reductions in work force and how that was going to impact regular everyday business —



**Observing.** Marcia Gaedcke, president of the Titusville Area Chamber of Commerce, said leaders are learning more from other "communities' mistakes than we are from things that have gone well."

the dry cleaner, the hair salon, the restaurant."

**GAETJENS:**

"I still see a lot of optimism within this community; it's not dark and dire. . . . This is a great place to live. There's a lot of resources — natural resources, work force and leadership — that's available here in Titusville.

"We've always been kind of a secret, but now we need to do our best as a chamber to maintain our membership and get through these difficult times. Titusville is very resilient, and we will get through this."

**QUESTION:**

**What is the county doing to help the community?**

**FISHER:**

He said the county commission will vote Tuesday on the continuation of a moratorium on transportation impact fees and is working with Titusville officials to secure funding to build Exploration Park, a planned 60-acre research park that could potentially create about 1,750 jobs.

Fisher, who started a grass-roots campaign to rally support for human spaceflight, said the county's local preference ordinance, which gives preference to local contractors, is helping create jobs in the area.

"Jobs, jobs, jobs is the No. 1 priority. I'm more worried about that than paving

some asphalt. We want to be part of the solution for sure."

**QUESTION:**

**What types of businesses and industries could Titusville recruit?**

**CHESNUT:**

"We're seeing a lot more emerging technology industries, green industries — industries that are looking at biomedical-type fields, alternative energy fields. . . . A lot of them do want to tap into the existing work force that's here and develop from that."

"When we talk about Titusville. . . we have the interstate. We can get you there by air, water, rail and space. Not very many cities in the world can claim all of that."

**GAETJENS:**

He said the opportunity exists to attract more ecotourism to Titusville.

**QUESTION:**

**What are you learning from communities that have gone through this before?**

**GAEDCKE:**

"We're probably learning more from communities' mistakes than we are from things that have gone well in most cases. . . . We've talked to a lot of people who have said, 'If I had to do it all over again, these are some of

things I would have thought about.’”

She said they have talked to Flint, Mich., which is “wishing they had taken a more proactive approach. They’re now trying to recruit businesses to fill up Main Street.”

“In our country, we have a definite system to handle natural disasters, but we do not have a system to handle economic disasters. We are, in some cases, charting new territory.”

**QUESTION:**  
How do you influence Congress or the White House? How can regular people get their voices heard?

**GAEDCKE:**

“As we’re walking the halls of Congress . . . we can’t talk about jobs to these folks because they are having the same situations in their own communities. Everybody has a different story about a different industry that is changing, so you can’t talk jobs. You have to talk things like national security, about advancements, technological advancements.”

**FISHER:**

He talked about how the Save Space campaign took off on Facebook. Since the White House’s budget announcement, he said, “we’ve gone from over 4,000 members to over 10,000 members in two weeks. It’s gaining a few hundred a day. . . . The wake-up call has hit that this

is real.”

**QUESTION:**

Has there been a feeling of denial in Titusville and at KSC, hope that a reprieve was coming?

**FISHER:**

“There was always something else after it ended. . . . The fact that not only you stayed the course with ending the shuttle, but you killed the next vehicle — that I think caught people off guard.”

**RYAN:**

“Yes, we’ve been working other avenues trying to become more diverse. But we always knew there was Constellation. That was the sucker punch.” ■