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**Matt Reed**

Watchdog

# Gator star tackles Brevard's tough issues

Can we save the space program, slow violent crime and keep a bad economy from sinking county government?

County Commissioner Robin Fisher is trying.

Elected last November, Fisher brings an interesting resume to the position. He was a star defensive lineman for the Florida Gators, owns a successful State Farm insurance agency, served as a councilman in Palm Bay and Titusville and has served as chairman of the Central Florida YMCA.

Fisher represents District 1, which includes Titusville, Port St.

John and Kennedy Space Center.



**Fisher**

for NASA funding and extend the life of the shuttle fleet. Where did that idea come from?

**FISHER:** I started thinking more about what was going to happen when the shuttle does retire and how that was going to affect 7,000 jobs, direct jobs, and they say indirect jobs could be 20,000. That's going to hammer my district.

I noticed nobody was saying anything about it as a community. I knew our elected officials were screaming up there — Sen. Nelson and Congressman Posey and Congresswoman Kosmas, they're doing their part, I think — but as a community we weren't screaming.

President Obama . . . still hasn't said exactly what he's going to do. But I know what he said he was going to do if he got elected. So, we're going to try to hold him to that promise.

**Q:** Commissioners approved a \$1.1 billion operating budget for the coming year, reflecting cuts of \$40 million and 199 county government jobs. You were the lone vote against that on the first reading, but then supported it on final passage. Explain.

**FISHER:** I'm an ex-athlete . . . I got on board because that's where the team was going.

My vote was not that I wanted to raise taxes. By law, we were allowed to collect the same amount of taxes that we did the year before. So that would not have been a tax increase to the people. The economy hasn't changed and doesn't look like it's going to get better next year. So we needed to look beyond the next year and make sure we can handle our obligations for the next 2-3 years.

**Q:** What is the typical resident in your district going to experience as a result?

**FISHER:** If you look at libraries, for example, we're changing the hours of operation at the Mims and Titusville libraries. Whereas, you used to be able to walk in any time you wanted and services were available, hours have gotten shifted and cut back. Soccer fields and baseball fields, where you used to be able to count on them being mowed sometimes twice a week, they might get mowed once per week.

Some of these things, we passed referendums and built them and said they were important to our quality of life — and we're adding more — but we're struggling to maintain the ones we have.

**Q:** In September, after you cited a "horrible trend" in homicides, you called a strategy meeting with Sheriff Jack Parker, Titusville Police Chief Tony Bollinger, the state attorney's office, judges, church pastors and community leaders. A couple of those killings affected people close to you. What happened?

**FISHER:** I had two close friends within a two-day period lose a loved one. I got that call at 3 a.m. from Chief Bollinger who said, "Your buddy, Ken, is going to need you . . . His daughter was killed last night." That hits home.

It's all related to the guns and the drugs and, unfortunately, is really showing up heavily in the African-American community.

See REED, 3B

# Fisher: Not many positions left to cut

REED, from 1B

I don't know the answers. But I know you've got to keep talking and bring the decision-makers together. We've had two meetings and then we're going to do a workshop.

Some of it may involve government stepping up and finding dollars and changing laws to keep the bad guys in jail longer. With Ken's daughter, that guy had 27 felonies.

**Q:** How has your perspective on county government evolved in the past year?

**FISHER:** Like most people, I watched during the boom, and I thought, "Those guys . . . there's millions and millions more tax dollars coming in, and we're going to go in and cut here and there, and there."

I took my personal CPA and put him on the citizen budget-review committee to help me figure out where we could make cuts. When we dived in, we found out that the county has done an overall pretty good job over the past few years of cutting positions. They're down in every area except law enforcement and corrections, and that's where most of the increases were.

That was a big surprise. I thought there would be a lot more fat.

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