



The Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce's

DAPHNE MUNICIPAL VOTER GUIDE

ELECTION 2008

www.eschamber.com

The Candidates

Mayor



Ernie Berger



E. Harry Brown



Fred Small

City Council

DISTRICT #1
Bailey Yelding, Jr.*

DISTRICT #3
John Lake
Pina Witherington

DISTRICT #5
Willie Robison
Ron Scott

DISTRICT #2
Cathy Barnette
Kathy Ebbitt

DISTRICT #4
Greg Burnam
Gary Reyes

DISTRICT #6
Derek Boulware
Eric Nager

DISTRICT #7
August Palumbo*



**These candidates are unopposed and responses are not included in the Voter Guide.*



Another service of the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce

Question #1: What is your previous experience or involvement with business?

Mayor

Ernie Berger	I have a unique combination of small and large domestic and international business and non-profit experience. I worked in our family business from age 14 through college. I served for 21 years as a human resources executive with General Electric working under three Chairmen, including Jack Welch. I founded MTS, Inc. a national physicians networking company, Santa America, a 501c3 non-profit and The Elf Group, LLC, a human resources, marketing and administrative services company.
E. Harry Brown	I was employed by Bell South for 36 years, retiring to become full time mayor in 1996. As Mayor of The City of Daphne for twelve years I prepared a balanced budget annually, and as the chief administrative officer of the City I was in charge of over 200 employees. From 2004 until now I have been a commercial real estate agent and managing broker for Coldwell Banker United Realtors. I am currently managing broker of E.H. Brown L.L.C.
Fred Small	Worked for Chicago Bridge and Iron Co. from 1971-1987. Last position held was Superintendent. Owner of Fastime Convenient Store in Daphne from 1991-present.

District #2

Cathy Barnette	Presently I serve as Executive Director for a private non-profit organization, Santa-America, Inc. My leadership role in a variety of non-profits brings experience in developing strategic plans, expertise in setting priorities, administering budgets, fundraising, program development, conflict resolution and communication. Since 1995, I have interacted positively with the Chamber in various capacities as Chair of the Environmental Committee as well as Councilperson for the City of Daphne.
Kathy Ebbitt	Working in public and private sectors and the collegiate environment has given me experience in linkages between employer's needs and staffing. I have owned a business in recruiting and placement of engineers in high technology disciplines. As a community college grants administrator, served on the economic development team providing training to area companies while managing comprehensive educational opportunities for adult learners on campus. Particularly experienced in the areas of manufacturing and aerospace.

District #3

John Lake	I was a business owner (John's Jubilee), and member of the Chamber, from 1985 to 1990. As a member of the Chamber, was Chairman of Christmas Poster committee in 1980. I, along with my brother, worked on the 98 Corridor. I am the Daphne Council representative to the Chamber of Commerce and serve on the Transportation Task Force - a part of <i>Blueprint for Tomorrow</i> .
Pina Witherington	I have owned businesses on the Eastern Shore including Pina's Mobile Home Park and Tone & Tan Fitness Gym. I worked with the U. S. Postal Service as a Rural Mail Letter Carrier and gained a lot of business experience during 25 years of service. As a Postal Union Representative, I learned ways to resolve issues without "filing a grievance". Problems resolved in this manner save money, and I am for saving money any way I can!!!

District #4

Greg Burnam	No Response Received
Gary Reyes	My previous business experience was co-owner of two businesses, one in Daphne and the second business in Mobile. I was co-owner of 9 Months Maternity in Mobile and Mom & Baby 2 Be in Daphne. As a small business co-owner I understood very quickly that I needed to pay taxes based on my revenues generated in order to secure my business license each year in each city. It is difficult to be successive in small business after all of the taxes are paid as well as the employee expense that is incurred.

District #5

Ron Scott	I founded and managed Scott and Associates a small business for approximately 10 years.
Willie Robison	No Response Received

District #6

Eric Nager	For the past eight years I've been an Investment Advisor Representative with Southern Capital Services, so I live and work in Daphne. Previously I worked for seven years as a financial analyst for a publishing company, so I've had 15 total years experience in finance, investments, and budgeting. Educationally I have a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from the University of South Alabama. I know firsthand the impact government has on small business.
Derek Boulware	As a lender in Baldwin County I work with business owners on a daily bases assisting them with most all of their financial needs. Prior to beginning my career as a banker I was in business for myself from 1998-2004. This was a great experience and gave me a real life understanding and appreciation of what it means to be a small business owner.

Question #2: Outline your top three priorities if you are elected.

Mayor

Ernie Berger	1. Daphne must have a comprehensive community vision for "smart growth." Our vision must support and nurture large and small businesses while respecting our heritage, environment, safety and daily quality of life. 2. Our vision must be supported by a 10 year strategic plan. 3. Our vision and strategic plan must be supported by a transparent properly prepared city budget and progress to the strategic plan and budget will be reported to our citizens in an annual "State of the City" Address.
E. Harry Brown	1. Financial Stability – Promote a Business Leaders Coalition and re-visit the Business License Ordinance and Fees. Update and check the current sign ordinance for a fair impact for businesses in concert with beautification efforts. 2. Fulltime leadership for all citizens with an open door policy. 3. Quality of Life Projects – Implement public works programs to resurface streets and correct drainage problems, use the long range comprehensive plan as a guide - emphasize environmental stewardship, traffic management and recreation facilities as dictated by growth.
Fred Small	1. Work with the council and the citizens thru a visioning process that will help lay the groundwork for a city strategic plan. 2. Find the balance between aesthetics and commerce. We need to work more closely with all of our business to ensure their success – and that may include signage on I-10. 3. Create a Comprehensive Road Resurfacing Plan for Daphne. Everyone gets a fair look to determine needs, add a timeline, and how we will pay for it.

District #2

Cathy Barnette	1. Continue to Fight for Equality in Fire Protection. 2. Continue to encourage municipal leaders to develop a clear, collective community vision about where we are going and follow that roadmap into the future. We must: Revise and implement long range plans and city ordinances, Evaluate and address proposed growth and development particularly traffic, groundwater, stormwater, water quality, recreation and public services, Identify annexation goals and limits, Develop a green-space plan. 3. Support Olde Towne re-development efforts.
Kathy Ebbitt	1. To be a contributing team member, utilizing acquired skills, in developing proactive strategic and vision planning for Daphne, considering goals of surrounding areas, clearly defining the direction of our growth. 2. To solicit input and direction from all citizens residing in district to be included in the planning process. To omit any constituent's voice is not planning. It is an agenda. 3. To be creative in problem solving. To seek new resources for planned projects.

District #3

John Lake	1. Address Traffic Congestion - Work to make Daphne and the Eastern Shore more pedestrian friendly; including bikes and other alternative forms of transportation. 2. Support Recreation - There are needs throughout the City of Daphne (Bayfront Park, Watten Park, and main recreation facilities). 3. Actively and aggressively work to improve the quality of life for all residents of Daphne.
Pina Witherington	1. Focus very closely on our budget. If we are overspending what is allocated to one particular category then we need to adjust other categories. 2. The sewer system - We chose the gravity system rather than a pump system and still some do not have sewer in our area. 3. Maintaining and improving the amenities that provide the quality of life that we enjoy here on the Eastern Shore.

District #4

Greg Burnam	No Response Received
Gary Reyes	1. To assist the residents of District 4 with an increase of Daphne Police presence in the subdivisions. Police sub-stations need to be developed and strategically placed in large populated areas. 2. There must be a sense of cooperation and unity within the council members. 3. As a military officer, I was assigned to U.S Embassies, to protect the U.S Ambassador and staff. I will work with others to deal with any bomb treats or hostile behavior that would harm our children.

District #5

Ron Scott	1. Help create a new comprehensive plan for Daphne. 2. Develop a five year capital plan to coincide with the comprehensive plan. 3. Bring the recreation complex to reality
Willie Robison	No Response Received

District #6

Eric Nager	1. My first priority is fiscal responsibility in the form of more controlled spending so that we can focus on basic city services like paving our roads. I have already proposed setting up a "Rainy Day" fund over and above our required reserve to act as a cushion and preserve our bond rating. This makes future borrowing less expensive. 2. My second priority is partnering with our neighbor cities. 3. My third priority is partnering with businesses.
Derek Boulware	1. Make sure that district 6 receives the road resurfacing funds it deserves. 2. Work with the mayor and council to enforce our city codes in order that we may properly manage the safety and image of our community. 3. Develop a new comprehensive growth management plan for the City of Daphne.

Question #3: Name the taxes or fees that impact businesses and residents that you would support increasing, and for what purpose?

Mayor

Ernie Berger	I do not believe Daphne can “tax its way to success” but can achieve many of its goals by collecting sales tax based revenue at the same or lower rates from businesses with growing robust revenue streams. A municipality must partner with business to drive business revenue, not add to the burden with taxes! I also support a planned and coordinated public and private grant application effort to help fund both city and non-profit initiatives.
E. Harry Brown	I will not support a tax increase of any type.
Fred Small	The only fee that I would support is an Impact Fee for new construction. These monies would go straight to Public Safety, Recreation, Roads and drainage and would not be a current tax on any of our existing residents. As more and more people and business come into our city this would help with much needed infrastructure to insure that we have what’s needed for our growing community.

District #2

Cathy Barnette	In 2020, the Eastern Shore is projected to have grown by 55% of its 2000 level. This rapid growth continues to create pressures on city services. I have been part of the initial committee to research and develop a stormwater utility that pulls municipalities together on a voluntary basis across political boundaries to address flooding, drainage and water quality problems. Additionally, the Impact Fee has been put forth as a way to address the rapid growth and needs which arise. Until the housing market rebounds, I am not prepared to pass this fee.
Kathy Ebbitt	Generating revenues through higher taxation rates isn’t the only way of increasing revenue. Better educational/work opportunities infuse the community with increased funding, making Daphne a better place to live. If raising taxes to meet necessary expenses, strategic planning must be clearly communicated to all effected. This is their money. Fallacies that businesses can afford higher fees result in these costs being passed on to consumers, sometimes making Daphne business owners uncompetitive with neighboring communities.

District #3

John Lake	I feel that taxes are counter-productive (such as Gross Tax) and we should lower this or move to a flat fee. Gross tax is like taxing a business for being successful.
Pina Witherington	I believe we have raised enough taxes in the past to generate sufficient funds to meet the needs of our citizens. Whether or not these funds are being spent wisely is something that might need to be investigated.

District #4

Greg Burnam	No Response Received
Gary Reyes	No Response Received

District #5

Ron Scott	I would support no new taxes or fees.
Willie Robison	No Response Received

District #6

Eric Nager	There are no taxes or fees I support increasing. One way I propose to partner with business is to reduce the burdensome business license tax. I’d like Daphne to be more business-friendly. Growth is coming and 60% of our revenue comes from sales tax. As the economy recovers, revenues will naturally blossom. In these days of \$4 gas, I want to see Daphne as a haven from additional taxes, not a source of them.
Derek Boulware	I would not be in favor of increasing taxes.

Question #4: Do you support the City’s decision to financially partner and support the Chamber of Commerce’s Blueprint for Tomorrow strategic plan and would you pledge to continue that support and consider future support on similar initiatives?

Mayor

Ernie Berger	Yes and Yes! In addition I believe Daphne and other Eastern Shore municipalities must explore new ways to leverage our individual and collective strengths. I am exploring the feasibility of “embedding” a Chamber executive on the Mayor’s staff for real time cooperation and integration. Daphne, Fairhope and Spanish Fort must embrace the concept of “Cooperate and Compete”. I intend to support the Chamber and other initiatives that increase Daphne’s commercial and municipal competitive advantages.
E. Harry Brown	I support the Chamber of Commerce's "Blueprint for Tomorrow" and the Chamber. But, that support is dictated by the budget.
Fred Small	I do support parts of the Blueprint and the Chamber has done a tremendous job with some of the studies that have been completed. I think we need to be careful not to duplicate work that is all ready being done. One example that comes to mind that has been a great tool is the transportation study. Spanish Fort, Daphne, Fairhope, County Commission and Brats are already looking at ways to add more routes on a day-to-day basis.

District #2

Cathy Barnette	The City of Daphne made a financial leap of faith that the Blueprint would be more than a document that “sat on the shelf.” With successful products coming out of the blueprint, i.e. transit and technology park studies (to name a few); I believe all Eastern Shore municipalities have reaped benefits from the Plan of Action. Assuming productivity and communication with the chamber continue, I will continue to support the Blueprint for Tomorrow.
Kathy Ebbitt	Each unique City on the Eastern Shore will have individualized growth plans. The Chamber’s Blueprint for Tomorrow speaks to the “big picture” future issues of our cities combined. To team together on projects which impact us all makes sense to ensure growth takes place cohesively. Unification could not only prove to be cost effective but enhance quality of living throughout the entire area. These initiatives must remain fair and equitable to cities involved.

District #3

John Lake	Yes! It is a no brainer. The Chamber worked to get all of the cities on the Eastern Shore to proactively work together and address critical needs that impact all residents and businesses. I would support future initiatives.
Pina Witherington	The Chamber does a superior job promoting the City, however I have not had the opportunity to view the Blue print, but I do have the utmost confidence in the Chamber and know they have the City’s best interest at heart. Therefore, I would be willing to support any project to further our common goals, depending on our budget.

District #4

Greg Burnam	No Response Received
Gary Reyes	The City Council must have a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. They must continue to work side by side to monitor growth. Strategic Planning must be part of the process, where both organizations work together. I will continue to support the work efforts of the Chamber of Commerce and will support the Blueprint for Tomorrow Strategic Plan.

District #5

Ron Scott	I not only support this initiative but have voted to help fund on a yearly basis. The Daphne business community brings in through license fees and sales tax over 60% of the City’s annual budget. It is paramount that the City supports the business organization that works for improvement for our business environment on a daily basis. The six areas that the Blueprint addressed... economic development, tourism, governmental affairs, education, transportation and the environment... effect not only the business community but all the citizens of the Eastern Shore cities. Money well spent!
Willie Robison	No Response Received

District #6

Eric Nager	YES! For the past year-and-a-half I have chaired the Chamber’s Business Academy Task Force, one of the key planks of the Blueprint for Tomorrow. The Academy has already trained hundreds in our local work force. As a chess coach and Reserve Army officer, I am very comfortable with strategic planning and value its importance. We need a comprehensive plan and working with the Chamber is another key component of partnering with business.
Derek Boulware	Yes, and I would support future initiatives designed to enhance the City of Daphne and Eastern Shore.

Question #5: What steps would you take to ensure that your city planning department is coordinating with peers in adjoining sister cities and the county?

Mayor

Ernie Berger	Inter-government cooperation is critical to leveraging our regional competitive strengths and addressing and correcting our weaknesses. As one example, the development of consistent zoning regulations across municipalities is a "must do." This will be a defined "deliverable" with progress milestones in the Strategic Plan for Daphne, Alabama. As such, I intend to report on progress toward this goal in the annual "State of the City" address.
E. Harry Brown	The city planning department co-ordinates with the adjoining cities and with the County by enforcement of subdivision regulations in the extraterritorial planning jurisdiction that is active. The City has responsibility with the County to enforce the most stringent regulations: City or County. This is very important if the City has plans to annex subdivisions adjacent to the City limits - that they are in compliance with City regulations.
Fred Small	This is already being done at the county level. We have had meetings with the county and the adjoining cities to work in this direction.

District #2

Cathy Barnette	As a member of the Daphne Planning Commission, I know communication is the #1 item needed to coordinate planning. Each planning commission should meet semi-annual to discuss our strategic vision, trends and problems with ordinances. Ideally, as trust and communication build, I would like to see the City of Daphne and other Eastern Shore Municipalities along with the County move toward streamlining our ordinances to create continuity.
Kathy Ebbitt	A plan for the area like this blueprint solidified, while cities grow differently meeting the needs of our citizens, can protect and preserve commonalities so important to us all. The strength of our leaders joining together to move projects forward, barring turf issues, will make us the community we envision. To quote an author in organizational design, Warren Bennis, "Not one of us is as smart as all of us put together."

District #3

John Lake	They are already working together but I would do one thing in addition: I would support them when they come to me.
Pina Witherington	I would determine what relationship exist between city planning and sister cities, and see if these relationships need to be improved.

District #4

Greg Burnam	No Response Received
Gary Reyes	1. Make sure that the planning department has an open line of communication with the other cities to reconcile issues before they become problems. 2. Planning commission departments should attend conferences in order to be knowledgeable about issues that the city planning department is involved in. 3. A monthly report by the City Planning Department to city council members – ongoing projects and projects that involve sister cities would be useful to inform constituents.

District #5

Ron Scott	This is a question that really should be addressed to the candidates for Mayor. As council members we have no authority to direct any of the city employees. I do think we could encourage the Mayor to have our Community Development office to work closely with our sister cities and the Baldwin County Planning and Zoning Department. Baldwin County is working on concurrency issues with the Baldwin County Board of Education for future classroom needs. All the cities in the county should be working in tandem on these growth issues.
Willie Robison	No Response Received

District #6

Eric Nager	As one of my priorities, I propose to help form and serve on a committee made up of at least one city council member from Spanish Fort, Daphne, and Fairhope in order to address our collective needs. The days of bickering among ourselves should be long gone. I grew up here on the Eastern Shore and appreciate the need to work together. For more details on my proposals please go to www.EricNager.com .
Derek Boulware	I would promote regular meetings between our city council and planning departments and the planning department of our sister cities. I am for the best interest of the City of Daphne and will work with anyone who shares in that interest.