

# Texas Government Finance

www.gfoat.org



## President's Welcome

***"Oh the weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful, and since we've no place to go, Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!"*** OK, so maybe it's not so realistic that we'll see anything resembling snow in most parts of Texas this year. Maybe some of you folks in the Panhandle might be so fortunate, but the rest of us will have to suffer through our Christmas picnics and days at the beach. Hopefully, we will need to put on our winter clothes for more than two days in a row at some point this holiday season!

It's difficult this time of year, but there are a few orders of business that need to be covered in this letter. First, the Nominating Committee for the coming spring elections has been appointed. This is the team that is tasked with selecting our slate of new officers for 07-08, including the positions of President-Elect, Secretary, North Representative (Regions 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 13 and 15), and South Representative (Regions 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 16). The committee consists of five members and is chaired by the Immediate Past President, which for this year is Roger Roecker. The others include two people who have previously served on the Board and two who are part of the organization's general membership. Agreeing to serve in these positions are Charles Cox (Farmers Branch) and Beverly Queen (Bedford) for the Board positions, and James Zentner (Odessa) and Linda Symank (Sugar Land) representing the membership. For more information about the requirements for candidacy or the committee, click on the following link to the GFOAT Constitution and By-Laws: [http://www.gfoat.org/bylaws\\_web.asp](http://www.gfoat.org/bylaws_web.asp). If you have someone you would like to nominate for a Board position or are interested in serving, please notify me or someone on this committee.



As we enter 2007, we also start looking forward to an exciting legislative year. Your Legislative Committee is already at work with TML staff to research the impact of some proposed legislation. If you get a request from Bret Starr, Bennett Sandlin, or Becky Grimm on running some numbers, please respond. This helps create important research data that TML uses in its legislative efforts. As the legislative season progresses, you will continue to receive email alerts to notify you of important issues and potentially ask you to speak to various representatives to provide education and information. That said, as many of you know, providing information to legislators has become quite controversial for many public officials. As such, make sure you have the support of your manager, council, and/or boards before representing your organization. And, most importantly, make sure you are submitting factual and informative information.

As another year winds down and the next begins, I always like to look back over the last 12 months and reflect on what's passed. This year has been a full and rewarding one for me, personally and professionally, especially with regard to GFOAT. Our organization has done a great job of continuing to provide excellent services for our members and has gained significant ground in several areas. With my term as President already half over, I want to reiterate the challenge for the rest of 06-07 (it's starting to sound like a broken record, but that's OK), which is ***to tell a friend or colleague, get active in your region, and help lead the organization.***

Please have a wonderful and safe holiday season. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Steve Williams

## Training Calendar/News

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**2006 Fall Conference** - Presentations and pictures on-line at: [http://www.gfoat.org/fall2006\\_web.asp](http://www.gfoat.org/fall2006_web.asp)

**2007 Spring Institute** Save the Date - April 22-24. See [preliminary info.](#)

[GFOA Registration Open -](#)

### ***NEW MEMBERS & ON THE MOVE....***

New Members:

**Mary Campus**, Accounting Manager, Brazos River Harbor District (region 4)

**Larry Homan**, Director of Finance, Live Oak (region 7)

**Gayla Pickens**, Asst. Finance Director, City of Pampa (region 2)

Retiring:

**Terry Knudsen**, Webster

Moving:

**Mark Kaiser**, City Administrator, Stephenville

**Michael Rodgers**, Finance Director, Webster

## Member Spotlight

Steve Williams CGFO  
Director of Finance  
City of Conroe

Member Date: 4/7/1998

### **The Facts**

#### Education

BA 1994 University of North Texas  
MPA 1996 University of North Texas

#### Experience

02/05 - Current Finance Director, City of Conroe  
01/00 - 02/05 Director of Budget & Research, Town of Flower Mound  
03/99 - 01/00 Financial Analyst, Town of Flower Mound  
04/96 - 03/99 Sr Budget Analyst, City of Dallas  
01/96 - 04/96 Management Analyst Intern, City of Irving  
03/95 - 09/95 Admin Intern, City of Southlake

#### Certifications / Awards

CGFO

#### GFOAT Service

President, 07/06 – present  
President-Elect, 07/05 – 07/06  
Board Secretary, 07/03 - 06/05  
Program Committee Co-Chair, 07/05 - present  
Professional Development Committee Co-Chair, 2001-2003  
Scholarship/Fellowship Committee Member, 2001-present

#### The Interview

Q: What has been one of your greatest accomplishments / projects as a Government Finance Officer?

A: I consider getting the CGFO certification a big accomplishment.

Q: What was one of your greatest learning experiences in your government finance career?

A: Working for the City of Dallas taught me the need for attention to detail, and that credibility takes a long time to build up and only a short time to lose.

Q: Who has influenced or had a great impact on you and your career in government finance?

A: Professionally, Harlan Jefferson in Flower Mound (Town Manager) taught me the most about being a critical thinker and a manager. Educationally, Dr. Bob Bland at UNT helped me build a foundation in government finance that gave me a big head start in the business.

Q: What has been one of your greatest challenges as a Government Finance Officer?

A: The one that comes to mind is the most recent, which is moving to Conroe. It was not exactly easy to follow in the footsteps and build upon my predecessor's (Chip VanSteenberg) accomplishments, since he was so popular with the staff. I like to call him Saint Chippipher.

Q: What, to date, has been your biggest screw-up, no let's say 'on-the-job learning experience'?

A: One time, a long, long time ago (OK, not that long ago), I made a formula error on a salary

spreadsheet and "misplaced" about \$500k of the Police Department's budget. No real money was lost, but I did have to eat some serious crow with my boss when we had to lower the amount of "extra" money for the next budget year.

Q: In your crystal ball, what do you see as a future challenge for government finance?

A: Over the next decade or so, it's going to be difficult to replace a lot of the solid finance directors that are retiring. Also, dealing with the Texas Legislature's insistence that all tax revenues should be consolidated at the state level (i.e., tax/appraisal caps, new sales taxes) should be fun.

Q: What words of wisdom would you pass on to a new Government Finance Officer?

A: Set your goals and standards high and continually reach for them. Step out and take on new challenges when they come your way.

Q: What are your hobbies that help keep you sane?

A: Since the pace of life seems so insane most of the time, it's by God's grace that He keeps me sane at all. But, He does use some pretty good tools to get the job done, like my awesome wife and family. I guess I would have to say that hanging out with my family takes up most of my free time. But, we do lots of fun things together, like church activities, karate, camping, and hunting.

## Technical Articles

# The State of Our Economy

**By: COASTAL SECURITIES**

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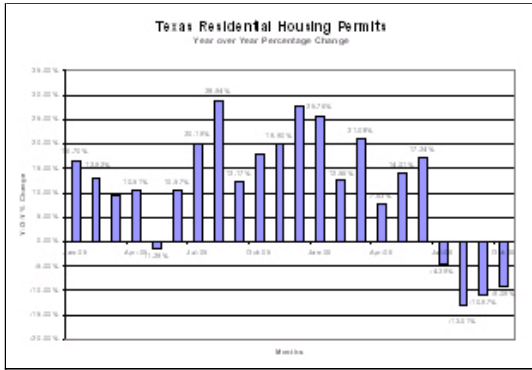
The gradual, expected, and carefully engineered soft landing is underway. Nationally, the economy has been slowing in interest rate sensitive sectors as expected. Sectors including housing, construction, capital spending, and motor vehicles have slowed significantly causing many to expect a very meager 4th quarter GDP growth rate of nearly 1.5%. As the effects of the housing drag are fully distributed, GDP should rise to nearly 2.5% in the first quarter of 2007 and closer to 3% in the second quarter of 2007. Assuming no more increases in short term interest rates and no unforeseen external shocks, national economic growth should approach 3.5% for the 4th quarter of 2007 causing year over year growth to approximate below trend growth of 3%.

Regionally, the picture is similar. Despite the State of Texas' reliance on exports and energy, the state's economy has become increasingly correlated with the national and global economy. However, we expect a rosier gross state production growth at a slightly faster pace than the national economy during 2007. As a result, and as anticipated, this means gross state production should come in at a relatively slow rate for 4th quarter 2006 as higher interest rates have their desired impact on growth. Still, the state's growth should outpace national growth throughout 2007 and 2008.

Gross state production will be differentiated from national production as a result of production in sectors including services, exports, and energy related industries. Like the national economy, much of the expected 2007 employment growth in Texas will be service jobs in sectors including health, business and professional, government, leisure and hospitality, and retail. The state's slowdown combined with healthy productivity will cause employment growth in the goods producing sector of the states economy to slow. Because "services" are less affected by "output per unit of input" – productivity – the sector will not be as affected by these productivity gains and should therefore have a positive impact on Texas' employment situation as demand for the state's services should continue at a sustainable pace throughout 2007.

It is generally the case that employment growth lags an improving economy as employers ensure that revenue and profits are sufficient to sustain any increases in employment costs. Like the national economy, the state's output was advantaged by high profits during 2006; as a result, we anticipate spillover to higher employment in 2007. Along with this increase in anticipated employment, wage growth should be a byproduct that will help sustain personal income growth during 2007. More locally, Houston's employment continues to expand. The unemployment rate in the city has fallen to lows not seen since 2001.

Despite similarities among regional growth and national growth, Texas continues to benefit from a more concentrated economic distribution. The lack of correlation between Texas' economy and the national economy is a result of the contribution to gross product that housing, services, exports and energy related sectors have on the state and the national economy. Texas has benefited from this lack of "perfect" correlation as the state's housing market has been slower to react to tighter credit than other regions. Nationally, existing home sales and residential prices have fallen during the several quarters. The effect on Texas has been lagged and muted. Texas' real estate market is beginning to experience a moderate slowdown in construction, while prices and existing sales continue to be mildly supported. Texas residential single family housing permits have begun to follow the national trend as

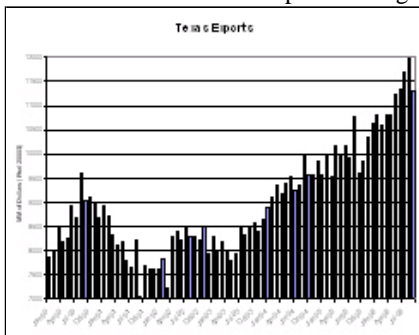


indicated in the graph above. Existing-home sales were up 18%, new home sales up 6%, while median home prices (at \$146,000) rose 2.8% year over year. Importantly, Houston’s current median home price of \$146,000 is a record high for Houston, but remains 33% less than the national median price, according to statistics released by the National Association of Realtors.

Obviously, Texas’ economy is largely dependent on energy and oil and benefited from increases in oil and natural gas prices that existed during 2006. However, the average price of a barrel of oil is expected to fall during 2007 relative to levels seen in 2006. Despite the decrease in revenue for Texas businesses associated with lower energy prices, the state’s economy should fair better under declining prices than under continued rising prices. This is

because sustained higher energy prices will cause businesses but mostly consumers to reduce investment and discretionary expenditures on non-energy related goods and services.

Global factors will impact Texas directly due to the state’s diversified economy. Exports continue to gain relative to other contributions to gross state production. It is no surprise that the state’s largest market continues to be NAFTA member Mexico, followed by Canada and China. Texas’ export shipments of merchandise – including computers, electronic products, chemicals, transportation equipment, and petroleum products - totaled more than export shipments of merchandise of any other of the 50 states. We expect exports of chemicals and non-apparel textiles to continue to increase during 2007. Inflation adjusted Texas exports grew at a healthy pace in the third quarter of 2006. The increase marked the fourth successive quarter of export growth. When compared with a year ago, real exports are up over 15%. The increase in Texas exports continues to surpass total US increases in merchandise exports through recent historical periods.



The tech sector in Texas has historically been one of the most important to the state's economy. Near term challenges to its continued profitability come from global companies aggressively pursuing the market share that has traditionally been held by domestic firms. Computer manufacturers Dell and HP are by far the largest contributors to the state's technology sector. Dell and HP pay 52% and 44% of the wages of the state's computer industry workers, respectively. To paraphrase an old adage: "what's good for Dell and HP is good for the state." Currently, over 3% of Texas' gross state product comes from the manufacture of computer and electronic products, versus the national average of 2.5%. Many of Texas' high tech firms are based in the Austin area. The fact that the unemployment rate in the Austin/Round Rock area has declined faster than that of the

nation as a whole stands as a testament to the continued strength of the Texas technology sector.

Given the relatively low and declining level of the dollar, foreign imports should outpace exports and should result in a positive contribution to growth in Texas. However, the relative value of currencies have many determinants – some economic and some political. For example, if Asian economies (holding lots of dollars) allow their currencies to increase relative to the dollar, foreign investors could demand higher US interest rates as a payoff for financing our increasing current account deficit. This increase in interest rates will cause the regional economy to slow.

Expectations for domestic short term interest rates have become less of a “wild card”. From June 2004 to July 2006, the FOMC raised the federal funds rate target 17 consecutive times causing it to move from 1% to 5.25%. As long as measures of inflation remain within the acceptable bands, we feel confident that there will be no more increases in the target rate during 2007. However, a higher than expected level of inflation at the wholesale and/or retail level, could cause the Federal Reserve to continue to tighten credit and cause short term interest rates to rise to ward off inflationary pressures most often recognized in prices and on the longer end of the yield curve. Another tightening by the Fed could cause sectors including housing, automobiles, consumer credit, and business inventories to experience slowdowns that would significantly change the healthy anticipated 2007 growth mentioned above.

The “conundrum” is the level of long term interest rates. Historically, long term rates respond to short term interest rate increases

with a lag but eventually rise to affect a positively shaped yield curve. This has not happened. Long term interest rates declined through most of 2005 as short rate increased. As troublesome as this has been for many in the US, others around the globe have experienced similar yield curve pressures. Globalization is an explanation given by many economists as to this de-coupling of the historical relationship between short and long term rates. Trade liberalization and more open capital markets makes for freer movements of goods, services and, more importantly, currencies. These freer flows of funds have caused the determinants to local yields to be more varied and complicated.

Despite the softness in some recent reports and expectations for slow 4th quarter growth, there are clearly reasons to be optimistic about growth in 2007. Energy prices have retreated causing expectations for growth in consumer spending as a result of increased real incomes. Importantly, these energy price decreases will positively impact core and non-core inflation statistics. The strong rise in equity wealth that resulted from the recent stock market increases also bode well for consumer spending. In part a result of the dollars relative value and continued demand from overseas investors, net exports appear to be shifting from a source of GDP drag to a source of GDP support. This net export picture is likely to be enhanced for Texas. The well engineered slowdown appears to be a success.

## Sponsors

Thanks to all of our Sponsors for their ongoing support. Final sponsor payments are due January 15 in order to continue to be recognized at the conferences and in the newsletter. Sponsors, if you are unsure of your sponsorship status, please contact Becky Grimm at [bbgrimm@gfoat.org](mailto:bbgrimm@gfoat.org).

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## Committees and Regions

**Legislative Committee:** The committee is gearing up for the legislative session. Initial research is being gathered in the impact of some proposed tax caps. Contact **Bret Starr**, Irving at [bstarr@ci.irving.tx.us](mailto:bstarr@ci.irving.tx.us) if you want to join the committee. Be prepared for legislative alerts when sessions get into full swing.

**Ethics:** Applications being accepted now through **January 31** for Lewis F. McLain, Jr. [Ethics in Leadership Award](#)

**Region 8/13:** Dallas Fort Worth. Next meeting date: **January 19**, 2007, Arlington TX. Contact **Dana Navarette** [DNavarrette@nctcog.org](mailto:DNavarrette@nctcog.org)

**Region 14:** Gulf Coast Chapter. Next meeting date: **January 18**, 2007. Contact Jim Cooksey [JCOOKSEY@gcwda.com](mailto:JCOOKSEY@gcwda.com)

**FRRR Committee:** The committee has drafted a [response](#) to the latest GASB Proposed Concepts statement.

**Professional Development:** Next exam **Feb 14-16** in DFW, Houston and Austin areas; location and times still pending.

**FYI:** IRS announces that beginning **January 1**, 2007 the mileage reimbursement rate will increase from 44.5 cents to 48.5 cents per mile.

## Job Postings

### **City of College Station, TX-Treasurer**

Job Posted on: 12/20/2006

Closing Date: 2/18/2007

Salary: \$49,009 - \$60,052

[View Details](#)

### **CITY OF DALLAS-ACCOUNTANT [SENIOR] - I (18013)**

Job Posted on: 12/20/2006

Closing Date: 1/12/2007

Salary: \$41,364 - \$55,831+ annually depending on qualifications

[View Details](#)

### **City of Pearland-PROJECT FINANCIAL ANALYST**

Job Posted on: 12/20/2006

Closing Date: 2/18/2007

Salary: \$47K/annual (Minimum) DOQ

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### **City of Garland -Senior Budget Analyst**

Job Posted on: 12/18/2006

Closing Date: 1/16/2007

Salary: \$47,798 to \$62,150

[View Details](#)

### **Denton County Transportation Authority-Senior Accounting Manager**

Job Posted on: 12/6/2006

Closing Date: 2/4/2007

Salary: Not specified

[View Details](#)

### **North Texas Tollway Authority-Assistant Director of Finance**

Job Posted on: 12/6/2006

Closing Date: 2/4/2007

Salary: \$75,000 to \$85,000

[View Details](#)

### **City of Midlothian, Texas-Finance Director**

Job Posted on: 12/1/2006

Closing Date: 1/30/2007

Salary: DOQ

[View Details](#)

### **City of Seattle - Seattle Public Utilities-Finance Director**

Job Posted on: 12/1/2006

Closing Date: 1/30/2007

Salary: Salary: \$78,947.28 - \$130,249.44 per annum

[View Details](#)

### **City of Missouri City-ACCOUNTANT (BUDGET)**

Job Posted on: 11/22/2006

Closing Date: 1/21/2007

Salary: ANNUAL SALARY: \$30,456 - 38,076\*

[View Details](#)

### **City of Sherman -Director of Finance**

Job Posted on: 11/19/2006

Closing Date: 1/18/2007

Salary: Salary: \$80,000 - \$89,000 DOQ

[View Details](#)

**City of La Marque-Accountant II**

Job Posted on: 11/8/2006

Closing Date: 1/7/2007

Salary: \$40,090 to \$48,834 annually

[View Details](#)

**City of Lancaster, TX-CHIEF ACCOUNTANT**

Job Posted on: 11/6/2006

Closing Date: 1/5/2007

Salary: SALARY RANGE \$51,400 - \$75,400

[View Details](#)

**City of Denton-Chief Financial Officer**

Job Posted on: 11/3/2006

Closing Date: 1/2/2007

Salary: Salary Negotiable DOQ

[View Details](#)

**City of Bryan - Bryan Texas Utilities-Controller**

Job Posted on: 11/3/2006

Closing Date: 1/2/2007

Salary: Depends on Qualifications

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**CityBase.Net/GovSTAND-Retired Governmental Accountants/Accounting Clerks**

Job Posted on: 11/2/2006

Closing Date: 1/1/2007

Salary: Dependent on experience and availability

[View Details](#)

**City of San Antonio-Assistant Management and Budget Director**

Job Posted on: 10/29/2006

Closing Date: 12/28/2006

Salary: Starting salary is negotiable, depending on experience and qualifications. Benefits include subsidized healthcare coverage, retirement plan, life insurance, paid leave, car and cell phone allowance, and voluntary benefits. This position is exempt from Civil Service and subject to at-will employment status.

[View Details](#)

**City of Rosenberg-Finance Director**

Job Posted on: 10/25/2006

Closing Date: 12/24/2006

Salary: Salary commensurate with applicant's education and qualifications

[View Details](#)

**City of Fort Worth-Financial Reporting Coordinator**

Job Posted on: 10/3/2006

Closing Date: 12/31/2006

Salary: \$55,008-\$87,960 Annually DOQ

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**PRESIDENT** - Steve Williams, Director of Finance, Conroe; 936-522-3040; [swilliams@cityofconroe.org](mailto:swilliams@cityofconroe.org)  
**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT** - Roger Roecker, Dir. of Administrative Services, Friendswood; 281-996-3211 (Ethics/FRRR liaison); [rroecker@ci.friendswood.tx.us](mailto:rroecker@ci.friendswood.tx.us)  
**PRESIDENT ELECT** - Max Duplant, Beaumont; 409-880-3767 (Program Development/Legislative liaison); [mduplant@ci.beaumont.tx.us](mailto:mduplant@ci.beaumont.tx.us)  
**TREASURER** - Kent Pfeil, Finance Director, Richardson; 972-744-4145 (Scholarship/Professional Awareness liaison); [kpfeil@cor.gov](mailto:kpfeil@cor.gov)  
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**NORTH REPRESENTATIVE** - Don Jennings, Director of Finance, Perryton (FRRR liaison); [djennin@perryton.net](mailto:djennin@perryton.net)  
**SOUTH REPRESENTATIVE** - Micki Rundell, Director of Finance, Georgetown; 512-930-3677 (Professional Development Liaison), [mrundell@georgetowntx.org](mailto:mrundell@georgetowntx.org)  
**AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVE** - Beverly Queen, City Manager, Bedford (Membership liaison); [bqueen@ci.bedford.tx.us](mailto:bqueen@ci.bedford.tx.us)  
**TML BOARD REPRESENTATIVE** - Cynthia Alexander-Pearson, League City  
**GFOA REPRESENTATIVE** - Jerry Dale, Director of Finance, McAllen; 956-972-7185; [jdale@mcallen.net](mailto:jdale@mcallen.net)

## GFOAT FOUNDATION

**PRESIDENT** - Charles Cox, Finance Director, Farmers Branch; 972-919-2518; [coxcs@ci.farmers-branch.tx.us](mailto:coxcs@ci.farmers-branch.tx.us)  
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**MEMBER** - Anita Thetford, Hurst; 817-788-7011; [anitath@ci.hurst.tx.us](mailto:anitath@ci.hurst.tx.us)  
**MEMBER (EX OFFICIO)** Rhonda Young, Dir of Finance, Baytown; 281-420-6529; [rhonda.young@baytown.org](mailto:rhonda.young@baytown.org)

## REGIONAL DIRECTORS

### REGION 2 AMARILLO

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### REGION 7 ALAMO

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### REGION 8 FORT WORTH

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### REGION 10 HIGHLAND LAKES

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### REGION 11 COASTAL BEND

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### REGION 13 NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

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**Accounting, Auditing & Financial Reporting**  
Bob Scott, Carrollton, Chair  
Lena Ellis, San Antonio  
Randy Moravec, Addison  
**Budget & Management**  
Karen Rhodes, Plano  
Anna Mosqueda, Arlington  
**Cash Management Committee**  
Charles Cox, Ex-Officio  
Keith Nelson, Deer Park  
Diana Ortiz, Denton  
**Debt & Fiscal Policy**  
Dan Black, MAC, Advisor  
Charisse Page Mosely, Harris County  
Cynthia Alexander-Pearson, La Porte  
**Economic Development & Capital Planning**  
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Kent Pfeil, Richardson  
Rodney Rhoades, Collin County  
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