

# County of Hamilton

Dusty Rhodes

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## Auditor's Comments on Beginning the New Term

I am honored on the occasion of being sworn into office for the beginning of my 5th term as County Auditor. I want to say a special thank you to Prosecutor Joe Deters and his Chief Assistant Jim Harper, the latter of whom has administered the oath of office to me today. Also, it is fitting to acknowledge the excellent service and legal assistance the Prosecutor's office provides the Auditor's office on a continuous basis. This is an important relationship in County government and a genuine partnership in the public's interest. The employees of these two offices are doing a terrific job and deserve all of our gratitude. Thank you.

So while I am presenting no formal speech today, I did want to express some thoughts on this website which has done so much to reform and improve the County Auditor's office.

More than 6,000 people visit this site on an average each day. They learn what is valuable to them in the real estate marketplace, the consumer marketplace, and the realm of financial data. Mostly, they keep government honest by asking questions and identifying inaccuracies in data that prompt correction. In the future there will be even more information available about properties and our county's spending that will allow those interested to be still better informed and the County to be better watched.

For me it has always been about you . . . the people who pay the bills and who have a right to solid service from a limited sized government.

It is frustrating to watch (while significantly reducing the size of the Auditor's staff) our County government grow in scope and size. Frankly, the property taxes paid for all the services in our County are driving long term residents away and are a disincentive to others to locate here. Soon the very wealthy and those not able to leave will comprise most of our population. The vast array of assembled state and local government services will be funded by the rest of us who exist somewhere in the middle between those for whom the expense matters not and those seeking and receiving the services. Ironically some of the few people relocating here may be attracted by the magnet of generous social services. Is this how we want to attract inhabitants? Will we one day be better known for the social services we provide than for goods we produce? Will our population be more and more welfare recipients and less and less productive employees?

A lowering of taxes and a reduction in publicly funded social welfare services could make our community an engine for growth and a magnet for private investment, jobs, and population. We must aim to be a market based beacon for economic freedom that attracts capital and skilled workers rather than foster still greater dependence on government.

This is a vital quest for this area's elected officials and voters. Yes, we need good schools. Basic infrastructure needs to be maintained. And if we lack safety on our streets nothing else will matter! Still, if we do not cut taxes and cease believing we can perfect the human condition through ever expanding government funded social welfare services we will wither.

Thank you for your consideration and attention.

Dusty Rhodes  
March 12, 2007