

# St James

Polling place: Sunset Harbor VFD

To be elected: five council members

## Councilman



**Dennis Becker**  
3193 Wexford Way

A retired attorney, Becker, 64, is a founding member of council and a two year St. James resident. He served on the town's incorporation committee and is a member of the St. James Fire Department board of directors.

**If you are elected, what will be your top three goals as a member of the town's governing board?**

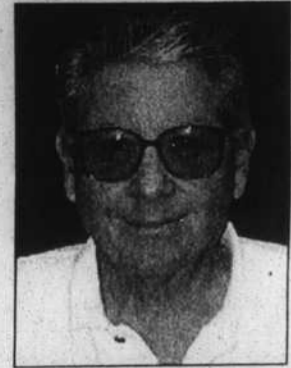
Our town of St. James must first develop a strong infrastructure and a sense of direction. Toward that end, three goals must be attained: To establish an efficient town government that will be prepared to assume functions of the property owner's association when it is both timely and cost-effective to do so; to prioritize and take action on St. James' most serious current concerns; and, to establish open channels for effective communication between the town council, the property owner's association and developer and the residents, so that St. James can choose its future course wisely.

**What is your opinion of your town's current year budget? Does it offer services you want to offer in the most affordable manner?**

The current budget is reasonable for a fledgling town. The budget enables the council to establish the municipal government and its offices in order to pursue its goals. The budget also funds the fire department so that our residents will have the benefit of an emergency service of utmost importance, as well as a reduction in home insurance costs. The current budget should increase when, and only when, an analysis reveals that the provision of additional services is both necessary and cost-effective.

**Why should the voter select you over your opponent(s)?**

I am on the ballot because I would like to finish the job I started and put the St. James town cornerstone solidly in place before I engage in other volunteer service. In working toward incorporation and the establishment of a government for the past year, I have accumulated a reservoir of knowledge concerning state, local, and town laws and issues. That knowledge should continue to prove useful on the council at St. James as we go through the initial, critical stages of gearing up our governmental process, while at the same time addressing our immediate problems.



**Harry Comer**  
4162 Sheffield Place

Another founding member of council, Comer, 64, has lived at St. James for 4 1/2 years and is retired from IBM. In 1996, he chaired the St. James pond committee.

(1) Continue the ongoing effort to establish the new Town of St. James, including setting up town offices, hiring key employee(s), creating necessary ordinances, resolutions, etc. (2) Come to grips with the drainage problem in St. James, working with the St. James Property Owners Association and St. James Development. (3) Interact with other local governments and agencies to help Brunswick County and our local area deal with major issues such as highways, wastewater, education, etc.

Since this is our first year as a town, we have no history by which to judge our budget. I believe it will be adequate for getting started, and that it will support the St. James Fire Department and emergency services which were key elements in our determination to become a town. When we better understand the drainage issue, we may have to make budgetary additions in fiscal 2000-2001. I expect our town council to use our financial resources in a responsible manner.

Since I have been a member of the interim council for a year, I have some experience working in this area. I believe I understand some of the major concerns of many of our citizens, and have initiated preliminary action to address them. I hope the voters see me for what I am: One of them, trying to help make St. James an even better place to live.



**Earl E. Dye**  
3144 Beaver Creek Drive

A retired research and development plant manager for a Fortune 500 company, Dye, 63, currently serves as St. James' mayor. He was born in Wilmington and has family in Southport. He spent 35 years in Virginia before retiring. His activities include being a member of the Southport Area Light Tackle Fishing Club and Saint Peter Lutheran Church.

My goals are: (1) To get the new Town of St. James up and running in a cost-effective manner; (2) to optimize our surrounding infrastructure by establishing a good working relationship with neighboring municipalities and county management; (3) to encourage citizen involvement in our town so the challenges of growth can be addressed in a productive manner.

Considering that we are a new town with no financial history, and after many budget iterations, I feel our budget will adequately support our present level of services. Through effective management and citizen involvement, our volunteer fire department has redefined cost-effectiveness and that will give our town the best value for the dollar spent.

Participating in the incorporation process of our town for the past 2 1/2 years in a leadership role, I have developed an understanding of state statutes and the political process as it relates to a municipality. In addition, a relationship with state, county and adjacent municipality officials has been developed. My leadership, planning and financial accountability skills were developed as a member of management in a fortune 500 company for over 20 years. Sitting on an industry technical committee in a leadership role in Washington enabled me to work with most federal government departments on sensitive projects as it related to our business.



**Joan Madsen**  
4402 Polly Gully Court

Executive Director of the Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministry, Ms. Madsen, 61, is a founding councilor. She is a member of the St. James Service Club, the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce and the chamber's Christmas-By-The-Sea committee.

(1) To establish the government of our new town in an orderly, efficient and cost-effective manner by adopting necessary policies and procedures. This requires planning so we can act, rather than react. We should not rush into decisions. (2) To maintain an on-going dialogue with the residents of St. James, the POA and the developers to assure adequate planning for the eventual transition of the POA to the residents. (3) To be an advocate for the residents of St. James as we work with the county government to serve our overlapping populations in land use planning, traffic issues, etc.

We are a new town. Therefore, we have no budget history to guide us. After much discussion and consideration, I believe the interim town council has adopted the current budget with the best interests of the residents in mind.

As a current member of the interim town council, I was involved in the year-long process of steering the incorporation bill through the N.C. General Assembly. The task of creating a town has given me the knowledge to govern a town.



**Muzette Steck**  
2927 Trailwood Drive

A St. James resident for the last two years, Ms. Steck, 62, has spent 60 years in North Carolina. She is a member of Sea Notes Choral Society and the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce business development committee. She chairs the steering committee to reinstate the Brunswick County Council of Women.

St. James must be positioned for a smooth transition from developer to town management within a decade. I'd ask the town council to establish the means by which a mutually agreeable plan of transfer is designed. The plan would include a time frame for each transferred responsibility and its projected cost. Floyd was a wake up call. St. James citizens recognize the need for more than one evacuation route. It will be incumbent upon the council to identify and secure several evacuation routes. My third goal is to lessen the frustrations with our telephone system. I'll start at N.C. Utilities Commission.

At present, St. James doesn't provide any municipal services with it's \$391,000 budget, so I think it unwise to allocate even \$13,000 for travel and training. Conventions are for people providing services. The council can tap the wealth of training resources in N.C. universities and training institutes. The Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro has trained top generals, admirals, Fortune 500 executives, politicians, and me. I would definitely decrease the \$196,640 proposed for administrative costs. There are more efficient ways to use our tax dollars. In contrast, our Property Owner's Association presented a budget of \$1,000,000 yet only allowed \$78,000 for administrative costs.

My years of public involvement in NC have given me a wealth of knowledge and an extensive network which other candidates must acquire. For only four months, the appointed council has known St. James the seedling. For 40 years, I've known the forest in which the seedling must grow. The discerning voter will realize that my experiences will compliment those of the council and give it a dimension that has been lacking.



**Henry Ulrichs**  
2865 Trailwood Drive SE

A three year resident of St. James and a founding member of council, Ulrichs, 59, is a member of Sea Notes Choral Society and St. Peter Lutheran Church, where he is a member of the choir and serves church council and outreach committee. He has worked as a volunteer in the St. James firehouse construction effort.

My top three goals will be: (1) To establish an effective and efficient administrative function. This would include establishing policies and procedures for conducting the town's fiscal affairs and possibly hiring a permanent employee to maintain the budget and accounting records and to perform other administrative duties. (2) To develop an effective working relationship with the property owners association (POA) and the developer. Each has a role in meeting the needs of the town's residents. (3) To identify and clearly define the responsibilities of the town, the POA and the developer.

The town's current year budget is its first and, as such, is based on many assumptions with no history to support it. Having worked on it personally, I believe it is workable and will provide the services, particularly fire protection and rescue capability, needed at this time by the town in an affordable manner. In addition to the increased protection, having a fire department within the town will have the positive impact of reductions in future homeowner insurance costs.

While all candidates for the council of the Town of St. James, in my opinion, are well qualified to serve effectively, I believe that my professional financial background distinguishes me from most, if not all, of them. As a new town with no experienced staff in place, my background in finance and accounting will be of benefit to the town and its governing council.

Editor's note: Candidate George H. Gunter declined to participate in the candidate review

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