

*March 03, 2007*  
*Daytona Beach News-Journal*

## **Catching up with Palm Coast City Manager James Landon**

**By KENYA WOODARD**  
**Staff Writer**

PALM COAST -- The first weeks on the job for new Palm Coast City Manager James Landon have been a whirlwind of meetings, breakfasts and introductions.

But Landon said he's taking all the hoopla that comes with being the city's top official in stride.

"My job is to learn the community and culture and learn how I fit in," he said.

Landon, 50, left his job as city manager of Lancaster, Texas, to become the second city manager of Palm Coast.

He replaces Dick Kelton who retired in January after six years as city manager. Kelton will stay with the city as a consultant until April 30.

Landon said he and his wife of 16 years, Tresea, have settled comfortably into their new Florida lifestyle.

"My wife told me she's not moving again, so I'd better make nice with everyone," he said.

Landon said he's thrown himself into learning all he can about Palm Coast and the city's infrastructure. That means attending community functions, talking to civic groups and neighborhood associations, meeting with department heads and having one-on-one discussions with City Council members.

Landon said a crash course about the city's stormwater system is at the top of his to-do list.

"I'm used to curb-and-gutter stormwater system," Landon said. "The swale system is different."

Landon said he was impressed with the system following the heavy rain that fell in the area earlier this year.

"We had 7 to 8 inches of rain and no structural damage," he said. "Many other communities, if they got that kind of rain, people would be dislocated and businesses closed."

Landon's previous city government stints included city manager of Toledo, Ore., and director of planning in Ardmore, Okla. He also was a planner in Clark County, Nev., one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation.

At the time of Landon's selection, Palm Coast Vice Mayor Jon Netts said it was the Oregon State University's graduate's breadth of experience that made him the top choice.

In a recent interview, Netts said Landon's ability to quickly familiarize himself with the city's issues has made the transition from Kelton a smooth one.

"I think he will be very, very good for Palm Coast," Netts said. "Now (Palm Coast) is in the fine-tuning and adjusting stage and I think he's the right man for the job."

Landon said his immediate goals include learning about the city's development issues and educating residents about how their city government works.

Even the failed city hall bond -- a \$22 million referendum overwhelmingly opposed by voters in November 2005 -- is getting a review, he said.

Landon insists building a new city hall is not "on my immediate radar screen." But he wants to know why the bond measure didn't pass.

"Are we going to be (in the current city hall) a while? Sure," he said. "But as we grow, something is going to have to happen."

The most important mission for city government right now, Landon said, is to keep Palm Coast moving forward for its citizens.

"We have to watch out for the people who pay the bills," he said. "Our focus has to be who we work for and it's our residents."