

2015 Fayette County Year in Review

Traditionally, the celebration of a new year brings reflection of what was and preparation for what will be. As Fayette County sets its goals and prepares to achieve those goals, it is a privilege to reflect on the accomplishments of this county and to share some of the hard work that has been executed by staff this past year.

2015 began with optimism tempered with some apprehension as Fayette County moved forward into uncharted territory. It would be the first Board of Commissioners seated after court-ordered district voting. Yet in the spirit of what is a hallmark of Fayette County tradition, the Citizens and Board of Commissioners welcomed Pota Coston, the first African-American Democrat woman elected in Fayette's history. In her brief tenure, apprehensions eased with the realization that Commissioner Coston would work diligently to help bridge a difficult situation in our County. It was a pleasure for me, and each of the Commissioners, to work with Pota. Sadly, in July we were struck with the news of Commissioner Coston's passing after a valiant struggle with cancer. Her short journey had ended, but she helped set the course for the Board of Commissioners and the County, and she will be remembered for being the right person at the right time.

In 2015 this Board of Commissioners charged the Administration and Finance Staff with maintaining a balanced budget while rolling back the millage rate and not increasing property taxes, no small task that involved working with each department as well as other elected officials! Our thanks to all who helped us succeed in that endeavor.

The effort, led by the County's Finance Department, delivered a remarkable feat with its February announcement of the general obligation debt being upgraded by Moody's Investors Service from an AA1 rating to an **AAA rating**, the second agency to do so following Standard & Poor's AAA upgrade in August of 2014. Fayette is **one of only four counties in Georgia so distinguished**.

Additionally, in developing a sound and realistic budget, the Finance Department worked with the County Administrator, each County department, and other elected officials, among them our Judges, Courts, Sheriff, and Tax Commissioner. It is one of the reasons this department received the prestigious *Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award* for the FY 2015 Budget Document, the **18th consecutive year** of achievement.

In 2015, the County Clerk's office responded to approximately 190 open records requests, facilitated the appointment or reappointment of 34 Fayette County citizens to various Boards, Authorities and Committees, issued approximately 70

separate public notices, and produced 29 separate full Agenda Packages for viewing on the county's website.

In one of the first-ever textbooks published on municipal administration, Professor William Bennett Munro wrote the following about municipal and, by extension, county clerks: *"No other office in municipal service has so many contacts. The County clerk's office serves the citizens, the Chairman, the Commissioners, the County Administrator, and all administrative and operational departments of the county without exception. All of them call upon it, almost daily, for some service or information. Its work is not spectacular, but it demands versatility, alertness, accuracy and no end of patience. The public does not realize how many loose ends of county administration this office pulls together."*

The Clerk's office operates as a team of two that regularly provides outstanding customer service to the citizens of our county.

Fayette County is known for its outstanding school system, and 2015 witnessed a welcomed and major addition to the educational opportunities. The Board of Education has been the catalyst for ensuring that the future generation of engineers, pioneers, inventors, politicians, doctors, lawyers, writers, athletes and educators are prepared to stand with those competing in their career fields for top jobs. The recent August 3 **opening of Georgia Military College** in Fayetteville, lends to the foundation of success offered to students looking to pursue a higher education while remaining close to home. We are pleased to welcome GMC to this great county.

Continuing our quest "where quality is a lifestyle," the Extension Office offered Fayette residents relevant educational programs for both youth and adults alike. In 2015, **over 70 programs and events were conducted** on horticulture and environmentally related subjects, reaching nearly 1,800 youth and adults. In November, the Board of Commissioners recognized 4-H members that excelled at area 4-H competitions and have positively represented the county. Way to go 4-H staff, volunteers and youth!

Parks and Recreation also offers an essential service and valued asset that positively impacts the quality of life for the citizens. In 2015, staff administered **585 different classes and programs**, including such programs as fitness classes, adult programs, cultural/nature programs, youth programs, and therapeutic programs.

In addition, there have been several improvements to our parks to ensure the citizens continue to have quality facilities. Some of the improvements include the installation of two solar waste and recycling compactors, the purchase of a minibus for adult trip participants and Special Olympics athletes, continuation of the Phase II Kenwood Park erosion control plan as well as landscaping at the entrance of the park, two new scoreboards at Kiwanis Park, and the installation

of new fencing around McCurry football field to name a few. The addition of pavilions at Lake McIntosh and Lake Horton helped see an increase of 54% in citizens enjoying the park amenities.

Intergovernmental relations are critical to the success of any community, and in the spirit of partnership and working together, 2015 witnessed a significant milestone with the signing **a new intergovernmental water franchise agreement** between Peachtree City and Fayette County. The agreement would not have been possible without the sincere efforts of all participants. The resulting agreement successfully replaced numerous antiquated agreements with clearly outlined responsibilities, provides for efficient maintenance of Lake Peachtree, and ensures both the City and County will work together to maintain and enjoy this beautiful gem.

2015 saw the implementation of significant Water System improvements. Key projects included the implementation of a new Leak Protection Program, improved USGS (U.S. Geological Survey) monitoring to allow better management of raw water reservoirs, upgrades to our water treatment plants, spillway repairs and continued progress in the dredging of Lake Peachtree despite an unprecedented battle with Mother Nature's rainfall.

In 2015, the County Fire Department continued to shine as it completed the **installation of a new Weather Warning Siren System**. The final four sirens in this project completed the buildout of the system with a total of 35 sirens.

In an example of neighbor helping neighbor, June witnessed a microburst, devastating several homes, damaging others, and displacing many residents in the Tyrone community of Whispering Pines. Response to this event involved County Fire/EMS/EMA, the faith-based chainsaw group, and additional outside resources that came to the aid of residents. It was a true example of citizens and emergency services pulling together to restore a sense of normal as quickly as possible for all those involved.

During Christmas, we witnessed another of nature's tantrums with rains and floods not seen in recent memory. Again, in a true expression of the spirit of Christmas, Fayette County staff along with others, pooled its resources and worked diligently through the holidays to restore as much normalcy as possible to the citizens during a usually festive time of the year.

Working 24/7 every day of 2015, our 911 Communication center **provided exemplary customer service** to the many users of the 911 System including wireline, wireless and VOIP services. Last year saw 148,606 law enforcement calls dispatched through the 911 Center (a rate of more than 400 calls per day) and 14,055 fire and EMS calls (a rate of more than 38 calls per day). The commitment to the community for the 911 staff continues as they volunteer throughout the year for major events within the community.

Not all calls are emergency based. Under the direction of the Marshal's Office, Code Enforcement has re-organized to have some duties previously handled by the Code Enforcement Unit to be transferred to the Deputy Marshal. They have worked closely together to identify and **resolve code violation complaints within the county**. In January 2015, the Town of Tyrone requested assistance from Fayette County in providing code enforcement services to their town and in May of 2015 the Board of Commissioner approved that request. Many of Tyrone's code enforcement requests have since been handled by the Marshal's Office Code Enforcement Unit with no additional staffing needed.

The Public Works Division provides various services that touch the lives of our citizens every day. This year has included more than 29,028 tons of asphalt being placed by the paving crew, various stormwater projects, installation of a camera security system at local parks, construction of a new inert landfill, building maintenance repairs and work orders. The diligent work and experience of this department has **saved the county thousands of dollars throughout the year**.

As it relates to dollars spent, the Purchasing Department estimates to have created 675 purchase orders with a value of \$4.8 million by December 31. In our continuing effort to provide open government, the Purchasing Department has also worked with Administration to provide citizens user friendly **access to contracts by visiting the Purchasing link on the county website**.

The noted "engine of government business operations" for the county is our Information Technology (IT) Department. The IT Department has worked to **refine the IT governance framework** assuring the IT decision-making process considers the county's mission and that the best interests of the stakeholders are served. The IT Department maintains continual vigilance, using risk management tools and techniques, to provide safeguards and countermeasures to thwart increasing cybercrime threats. A Steering Committee has been formed to focus on IT strategic planning, project prioritization and project approval.

As elected officials, citizens expect those placed in office to put the County first, to stand by campaign promises, and to maintain their integrity while doing so. As employees of Fayette County, citizens expect Staff to provide the best customer service possible in return for the taxes they pay.

It is the job of elected officials and Staff to work together as a team to provide an efficient and smoothly running government that lives up to the expectations of our citizens. Within the twelve months that fly by every year, we experience successes and failures. That is part of life. There are events and situations that are sometimes deemed as "not your best moment." We all have them. Then

there are those shining moments... the moments that you know exactly why you do the things you do, say the things you say, hold on to the things that matter to you. The accomplishments mentioned are only a small peep into the daily routine that supports the expectations our citizens have of their local government, and only touch on the teamwork, dedication, and hard work that help keep this county advancing. There is much that has been accomplished and noted...much left to be accomplished. But it has been those shining moments that make me feel honored to have been a part of the success of this county and honored to serve with the four gentlemen that sit on this Board. I am indeed privileged to serve Fayette County and its citizens.

Charles W. Oddo
Chairman
Fayette County Board of Commissioners