



TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC MEETING - INTERVIEWING TOWN MANAGER FINALISTS AGENDA

December 04, 2024 at 3:00 PM

Council Chambers – 340 Ocean Drive and YouTube

NOTICE: *Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations in order to participate in the meeting should contact Caitlin E. Copeland-Rodriguez, Town Clerk, at least 48 hours in advance to request such accommodations.*

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 1.** Public Interviews with Town Manager Finalists

ADJOURNMENT



Meeting Name: Special Town Council Meeting - Public Interviews

Meeting Date: December 4, 2024

Prepared By: C. Copeland-Rodriguez, MMC, Town Clerk

Item Title: Public Interviews with Town Manager Finalists

DISCUSSION:

Town Council and residents have the opportunity to hear from and ask questions to three (3) of the four (4) finalists for Town of Juno Beach Town Manager position (alphabetical order) – Darren Coldwell, Patrick Comiskey, and Scott Moye.

The Town Council is expected to make their selection on Friday, December 6, 2024 at 10AM.

ATTACHMENT:

- 1) Darren Coldwell’s Candidate Report;
- 2) Patrick Comiskey’s Candidate Report; and
- 3) Scott Moye’s Candidate Report.

COLIN BAENZIGER & ASSOCIATES
EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Section 6

Darren N. Coldwell

*Juno Beach Town Manager
Candidate Report*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
COVER LETTER AND RESUME	1
CANDIDATE INTRODUCTION	9
BACKGROUND CHECKS	17
CB&A REFERENCE NOTES	21
INTERNET SEARCH	33

Cover Letter and Resume

11/07/2024

Darren Coldwell
PO Box 3857
Page, AZ 86040
Darrencoldwell56@gmail.com
406-291-9909

Town of Juno Beach, Florida
Mayor Wheeler & Town Council
340 Ocean Drive
Juno Beach, FL 33408

Dear Mayor Wheeler & City Council,

I am writing to express my interest in the position of City Manager for the Town of Juno Beach, Florida. As the current City Manager of Page, Arizona, I am responsible for overseeing all day-to-day city operations which include managing thirteen different departments: IT, Finance, Parks & Trails, Planning & Zoning, Recreation, Community Marketing, Economic Development, Public Works, Police, Fire and Rescue, Lake Powell National Golf Course, Horseshoe Bend, and Special Events. Additionally, I oversee smaller departments like the Library, Community Center, and Digital Information. In total, these departments employ over 200 dedicated staff members and operate with an annual budget of nearly \$90 million. Page is a full-service community of 7,500 residents, but swells to 40,000 during the day. Page has 2500 hotel rooms, over 400 short-term rental accommodations and 50 restaurants. The operation of these facilities brings workers from all around the area for employment.

Under the direction of the City Council, I implement approved policies, procedures, resolutions, ordinances, and directives. My duties include appointing, conducting annual reviews, discussing disciplinary actions, and, when necessary, removing City employees. I develop and implement Page's Capital Improvement Program and oversee large capital projects from inception to completion. I also coordinate and approve agendas for City Council meetings and have established strong working relationships with local and state legislators. My knowledge of state politics and the legislative process has been instrumental in my success. To enhance employee working conditions, I have initiated and participated in several developmental committees.

Creating and managing the annual budget is a significant aspect of my role. During the fiscal years 2020 and 2021, I creatively reduced the budget amid the COVID-19 pandemic by introducing incentives, a hiring freeze, and consolidating positions. Despite the financial challenges, I increased the Reserves and General Fund from \$23 million in July 2019 to \$51 million by February 2024, achieving a fully funded reserve fund of over \$12 million. As of July, last year, the City of Page is debt-free, including the emergency services retirement fund (PSPRS) and the Arizona State Retirement Fund. My extensive experience in local government budgeting includes working with Mill Levy Valuations and State Sales Tax Distributions, as well as negotiating health insurance contracts, union agreements, and rental agreements.

My human resources experience includes mentoring staff, setting goals, promoting professional development, encouraging initiative, and ensuring effective working relationships. I am well-versed in the legal requirements for disciplining or removing staff and have experience in both Right to Work and At Will states. My management philosophy is based on inclusion and tolerance, leading by example, and fostering a supportive environment. This approach has resulted in a stable management team, with only one Director leaving for a different career opportunity during my tenure. I am personable, understanding, and a good listener, which has helped me establish positive relationships with regional and local news media outlets.

During my time with the City of Page, I have made significant changes to personnel duties and responsibilities. I brought website design in-house, created a new Special Events department, and successfully promoted our City, resulting in over five million annual visitors, Which is more than the Grand Canyon. Our marketing strategy now targets extended stays and includes broader markets like Canada, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Texas, Utah, and neighboring states. These efforts have consistently increased sales tax revenue for the past 53 months and accounted for 5.2 million visitors in 2023.

I am confident that my leadership skills, private industry background, government experience that is both City and County, strong financial abilities, communication skills, human resources knowledge, and management style make me an excellent fit for Juno Beach. I would be honored to contribute to and help lead the staff of Juno Beach.

Thank you for considering my application. My family and I are excited about the possibility of relocating to the area, one of the best cities to live in, in Florida. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly at (406) 291-9909.

Sincerely,

Darren Coldwell

Darren Coldwell

Darrencoldwell56@gmail.com PO Box 3857 Page, AZ 86040 (406) 291-9909

City Manager

Education

University of Montana, Missoula, MT
Bachelor of Arts, Interpersonal Communications-Organizational Emphasis

A dedicated and goal-focused City/County Manager with a deep-rooted compassion for community engagement and extensive administrative management expertise. I am Darren Coldwell, a tested City/County Manager with a proven track record in navigating complex union contract negotiations, facilitating critical health insurance agreements, and structuring solid lease agreements. My ability to collaborate and communicate internally and externally provides me with the strengths in personnel management, decision-making, and public relations is complemented by a comprehensive understanding of budgeting, government administration, human resources, and municipal law. Trusted as an advisor and liaison, I am committed to making significant contributions that propel personnel towards achieving their long-term objectives. Open-minded and proactive, I prioritize listening and collaboration to foster success.

Work History

City Manager City of Page, Arizona Page, Arizona 86040	11/2019 to Present
County Administrator Lincoln County, Montana Libby, Montana 59923	02/2017 to 11/2019
Mayor City of Troy, Montana Troy, Montana 59935	11/2013 to 11/2017
Business Owner Booze n Bait Troy, Montana 59935	07/1992 to 06/2017

Skills:

Administrative Management Expertise:

- Oversee daily operations of all departments, providing strategic direction to Directors, Managers, and City Council/County Commission. This includes conducting personnel reviews, setting performance goals, fostering motivation, and implementing disciplinary measures when necessary. Extensive experience in oversight of Human Resources and decision making of Human Resources challenges.
- Created forward-thinking incentives to recruit personnel as well as maintain staffing levels. Incentives include potential signing bonuses, help with moving expenses, help with first and last rent and hook-up fees of new rentals, a mix of available work schedules including a four-day work week for all administrative staff. These changes of decreased turn-over of staff drastically, including Fire Department currently at full employment and the PD is only two recruits short of their staffing goals.
- Review and evaluate departmental structures to ensure optimal cross-functional training, streamline workflows, and enhance operational agility. Implement measures to strengthen the organizational framework and promote fiscal stability.
- Act as the primary coordinator of municipal activities, providing insights to the Mayor and City Council/County Commission on administration, financial management, and data automation. Develop and maintain comprehensive documentation essential for smooth administrative processes.
- A forward-thinking City/County Manager that motivates staff to participate in the vision that the City Council/County Commission has conveyed to residents. Ensures that a positive and cohesive environment is provided for all staff and encourages them to challenge the status quo.
- Engage with various stakeholders, prepare written communications for the Mayor and City Council/County Commission, and interact with the media to articulate the City/County's positions on key issues. Plan agendas, provide essential background information, and collaborate with the City Attorney on legal matters.
- Guide union contract negotiations, implement city policies, and foster strong relationships with state personnel. Oversee acquisition contracts for power distribution and solicit contracts for the City Council/County Commission, continuously striving to uphold governance and operational excellence.
- Pride myself in leading staff in going beyond expected delivery of exemplary service to the residents and constituents in the community.

Budget and Finance Management:

- Develop and oversee the City/County budget with a focus on transparency, accountability, and strategic financial planning. Manage and implement the annual budget, ensuring sound financial governance and operational effectiveness.

- Have exceeded in increasing the cash flow for the General Fund and was able to meet the goal for the Rainy-Day Fund by still meeting the expectations of the Strategic Plan, Growth Plan and the Transportation and Maintenance Plan.
- Provide intuitive financial reports to empower the City Council/County Commission with necessary insights for fiscal oversight. Develop and implement policies and procedures in alignment with City Council/County Commission directives, promoting financial stability through constant oversight of fiscal performance.
- Offer leadership and expertise on decision-making issues impacting the City/County's financial landscape, guiding the City Council/County Commission in making informed choices. Develop preliminary budget documents projecting cash flows, reserves, revenues, and expenditure requirements across all departments.
- Emphasize the development and maintenance of cost measurement procedures, BARS accounting allocations, and purchasing practices. Monitor budget execution, implement internal audit controls, and evaluate budget implementation for efficiency opportunities.

Community Development and Relations:

- Foster collaboration with City/County volunteers, representing the City Council/County Commission at meetings, hearings, and public events. Engage with the community to ensure their voice is heard and valued.
- Cultivate and nurture robust community relations while leading development initiatives that enrich the City/County. Participate in meetings and public engagements to address residents' needs effectively.
- Extensive experience working with the marketing of communities and expanding their outreach to improve market share. Innovative City/County Manager with success in public space placemaking and transforming the ideas of the City Council/County Commission into powerful platforms for success.
- Guide and mentor Board members, empowering them to contribute to community governance and progress. Foster synergy and cooperation with volunteer organizations, ensuring successful board performance.
- Advocate for sustainable land-use practices, conservation efforts, and natural resource preservation. Participate in volunteer board meetings to collaborate with community members for the City/County's betterment.
- Attract potential businesses to the community, fostering economic growth and creating opportunities for prosperity. Cultivate relationships with decision-makers and stakeholders for strategic partnerships driving economic development.
- Support the local business community by researching, initiating contact, and engaging with industry leaders and entrepreneurs. Enhance the economic landscape, promote business growth, and create an inclusive environment nurturing entrepreneurship and independence.

- **Volunteer Board Affiliations**

- Kootenai Valley Rotary, Former President
- Troy Fourth of July Committee, Board Chair
- Troy Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director
 - United For Youth, Board Member
- Kootenai River Development, Former Board Member
- Lincoln County Port Authority, Former Board Member
 - Troy School Board, Former Board Member
- Troy Volunteer Fire Department, Former Fire Marshall

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- **Professional Associations**

- American Society of Public Administration
- Government Finance Officers Association
- International City/County Managers Association
- Board of Directors Arizona City/County Managers Association

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Candidate Introduction

Section 6**DARREN COLDWELL**

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts, Interpersonal Communications, Organizational Emphasis. I have continued to focus on expanding my education by participating and attending classes from ICMA, GFOA and the many different professional management academies that are offered. I have given presentations on *How to Communicate as a Manager* at the Arizona League of Cities and the Arizona County/City Management Association. I have also received the FEMA 101 certification.

EXPERIENCE

City Manager, Page, Arizona	11/2019 – Present
County Manager, Lincoln County, Montana	05/2017 – 11/2019
Mayor, City of Troy, Montana	01/2013 – 12/2017
Owner, Booze N Bait, Troy, Montana	07/1992 – 05/2017

BACKGROUND

The full-service City of Page is located at the base of Glenn Canyon Dam and the Lake Powell Reservoir, the second largest reservoir in the United States. Page is a community located on the border between the state of Utah and the Navajo Nation. Page, which has a population of 7,500, but a service corridor of 40,000, has a greater amount of activity than most communities of its size. In the last five years, Page has gone through a major industry change with the closure of the Navajo Generating System, a coal-fired power plant. A drastic change in marketing has made the City of Page a multi-adventure outdoor tourist destination. With Horseshoe Bend inside the city limits, the Antelope Canyons, Lake Powell, and biking and hiking, Page has developed a tourist-based industry. The aggressive marketing of these outdoor features resulted in 5.2 million visitors in 2023. This has meant an increase in city services with 200 employees, I oversee 11 directors and managers. With additional tourism, the General Fund budget now stands at \$28.5 million, with a total budget of nearly \$90 million. The Capital Fund has reached \$16.5 million, while the CIP has reached \$10.5 million.

The City of Page is facing three major challenges:

- The increase of visitors has created several problems that Page had not anticipated. The first problem is affordable housing for those professionals who are needed in the community. The demand for housing, both rental and for sale properties, has created a very difficult environment for local businesses in terms of retaining and recruiting employees. Page is also surrounded by BLM and Navajo Nation property; this limits its opportunity for further growth.

Section 6

DARREN COLDWELL

- The second issue is the need for improved infrastructure. The increased demand on the roads, public utilities, city parks, and airport has created a situation that the city is not only unable to keep up with, but it has also been a challenge to find revenue to fund these projects.
- Water is always a concern in Arizona. The third most important hurdle that Page faces is a lack of water supply. Water is currently supplied by a pump that originates from Glenn Canyon Dam. This water source was installed during the construction of the dam 60 years ago. Currently, the estimated cost of installing new pumps and updating the treatment plant is \$40 million. The services are under financial strain now and in the future due to this daunting cost.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

Considering the reasons why my wife and I want to move to Juno Beach, the answers were simple for us. Originally from Western Montana, it is our desire to be in an area that offers everything that comes with living in a smaller metropolitan community that has a small-town atmosphere. We both desire to be in a beachside community like Juno Beach that is a hidden gem with a friendly relaxed atmosphere. Also, Juno Beach offers a low crime rate and safe neighborhoods that are important to both of us. Juno Beach is an excellent place to live, raise a family, and offers an opportunity to advance professionally. Juno Beach offers a financially stable opportunity, and it understands that decreased debt offers more opportunity to improve the town. The final reason, and the most important, is I am looking for a community that wants an experienced manager that wants to commit to a long-term engagement.

Management of people is not something that can be learned in the classroom or from one of the many books available on the topic. My professional management style has evolved over time. I believe that a manager leads by example, and it is important to mentor those who wish to advance in their career. My management style emphasizes mentorship, empowerment, and respect. My management philosophy is one of an open-door policy for the residents, team members, and the Town Council. I believe providing opportunities for advancement and creating an environment where staff can succeed in their own way is crucial to me. My management style is centered around listening to staff and emphasizing customer service. I also think it is important to set achievable goals for both me and my staff members and ensure that ongoing training and educational support for professional growth is offered to all. My hands-on approach not only nurtures individual development but also contributes to a positive and productive workplace culture. I am an expert in conflict resolution and a consensus builder that knows how to help all get to a yes answer.

I believe that my staff members would describe me as a manager who is both supportive and effective. I am a proven leader and decisive decision maker. They are likely to express their appreciation for my patience and hard work, acknowledging that I prioritize their needs while

Section 6**DARREN COLDWELL**

meeting the demands of the boards and council. My ability to advocate for staff and ensure that necessary resources are available to them demonstrates my commitment to their success. I am not a micro-manager of staff but rather a manager that delegates responsibility and promotes long range planning and stresses departmental annual plans. I am calm under pressure while having the utmost integrity, which are qualities that build trust and respect among my staff. Overall, staff would say that my down-to-earth management style and energetic approach encourages a positive and productive work environment.

As a City Manager, I believe elected officials would describe me as a dedicated and trustworthy leader who consistently prioritizes fiscal integrity. I hold my staff accountable for their actions. I have successfully built relationships with both the public and our elected officials, making significant progress while working in the state capital and engaging with our DC representatives. Elected officials will say that I understand that following their directives is crucial. I take pride in executing their visions while managing the difficulties of local government. In an environment that requires adaptive skills, I have proven my ability to wear many hats. Elected officials would speak highly of my problem-solving skills and unwavering work ethic, noting that I consistently strive to achieve the goals of elected officials while placing my commitment to ethical standards as a personal priority. Ultimately, I believe they would speak of my integrity and my commitment to represent the boards and councils with the highest ethical standards, ensuring that their interests and their need to be continuously updated, and the needs of our community are always at the forefront of my efforts.

As a City Manager, my greatest strength is my ability to bring together many different viewpoints and personalities to reach a consensus. This ability includes the important personal strengths of listening, respecting, prioritizing, and bringing stakeholders to a consensus. Juno Beach and its residents would benefit from my ability to work on multi-layered projects. The ability to build consensus is important in a small town where every resident isn't afraid to express their opinion to the Council. Working in smaller counties and communities has required me to be a successful multitasker, which enables me to professionally accomplish the never-ending workload that a manager has. Being able to wear many hats and my background in small business and private industry helps when you consider the development issues facing Juno Beach.

If I were to consider a weakness of mine, it would be my lack of patience at times. I am constantly striving for quick results, which can cause unnecessary stress. Now that I am aware of this shortcoming, it is the first step towards being patient and taking a deep breath and appreciating the value of taking events slow and steady.

I believe that there is a place for annual reviews, but as a manager I consider meeting once a year with an employee not only unfair to the staff member, but it is also unfair to the whole team. I personally meet every Monday at 7:30 AM with all my Directors as a group to discuss the prior week and the upcoming week. The team has fostered a sense of camaraderie because of this. I also meet weekly with the Department Managers and Directors individually for a half hour or

Section 6

DARREN COLDWELL

sometimes less to make sure that they receive what they need and to see if there are any issues that couldn't be discussed at the team meeting. By using this approach, I can ensure that I am on top of any personnel issues and have the chance to mentor and review the staff at least once a week, not annually. Twice a year, we all gather in one room to set department and city goals and discuss the progress of those goals. This has resulted in great productivity and provided a chance for team members to motivate each other in front of the entire group.

My professional career's greatest accomplishment is the new roundabout being constructed on HWY 89 and North Lake Powell Blvd. in Page. For many years now, this intersection has been problematic and has resulted in deaths. Although we worked diligently with the Department of Transportation, we were unsuccessful. Having built relationships with state and federal elected officials, I made the decision to attempt to apply for a state appropriation. It took three years of constant trips to the capital and phone calls to our senators and representatives to finally achieve success. Our congressman introduced it to the Transportation Committee, and with some wrangling and trading, the bill passed the Transportation Committee, succeeded in Finance, and was signed by Governor Ducey. Page was the first in the state to receive a state appropriation for an ADOT project, and I am currently watching the \$8 million project being built.

My biggest disappointment is a project that I had committed to for years. In 2020, the City Council directed me to develop a plan for a complete new Downtown Revitalization. Past councils have committed to the project by contributing to a Capital Improvement Program Fund, selecting an architectural and engineering firm, and continuing to place the project on their City Council priorities. In 2024 we succeeded in a Federal Economic Development grant for \$5 million to support the project and we learned that the regional League of Counties and Cities were placing it in their top three for funding requests in the amount of \$8.6. These two combined would fund the entire project. A contentious group of citizens came out against the project and sued the city. They were not successful in two lower courts, and they threatened to recall Councilors who supported the project. They have taken the case to the Arizona Supreme Court. I spent hours trying to inform the public and educate the City Council about the advantages of the Downtown Streetscape plan. Even with all of this, the plan failed 3 to 3. What I have learned is that no matter what you do, the dais changes every couple of years which can change the focus of the elected body. I also have learned that stepping back and reevaluating isn't failing.

Dismissing personnel is one of the most challenging expectations a manager faces. Of course, some are easier than others, but changing a person's life, normally never for the better, always bothers me. The Page Chief of Police was one of the hardest dismissals I had to do. For almost a year, I faced difficulties with the Chief. I placed him on a Performance Improvement Program, I did a 360 review, and hired a professional management coach to try and change his behavior. None of these actions brought him to a professional level that I felt comfortable with. The Chief of Police is an extremely political position and a very public one. In our final meeting I let him know that he was leading, but he no longer had any followers. As a result, I had to let him go. I did offer that if he had a resignation letter on my desk by the end of the day, I would accept it. It

Section 6

DARREN COLDWELL

is important to treat employees with respect, and as a manager, I take all steps to ensure that a staff member can succeed.

The challenges that I believe Juno Beach is facing:

- Juno Beach is a small town and with small towns come different challenges. Growing up in a small town I know how important it is for the Town Manager to spend the necessary time getting to know the people who call Juno Beach home. This can be one of the biggest challenges for many managers. The importance of making time for the residents and having that open-door policy that I discussed is especially important.
- The cost of aging infrastructure is a challenge that needs to be addressed. The next Town Manager is going to face a potential budget challenge with the town-wide Sales Tax expiring. I am fiscally conservative, which will be a positive during this time.
- With Juno Beach being a small community, the next manager is going to have to realize that the residents and the City Council are protective of the development of their town. A focus needs to be on growth that is a plus and beneficial for the entire community, not just a few or the developer. This is why my experience in consensus building can be beneficial to Juno Beach as a whole.

In the first six months as City Manager, my focus will be working with the leaders of the community to understand the culture of the town and focus on what they consider to be the priorities. I will spend time with the staff understanding what they feel the team sees as problems and what they sense the town is doing well. The next steps are to become familiar with the City Council and to take the time to understand each of their personalities and what they consider their priorities are for the Town Manager. Finally, spending the time to focus on the Council's written priorities and begin the necessary long-term Strategic Planning that needs to be accomplished.

The press has always been a great partner for me, I actually see the press as an arm of City Hall. In my view, transparency is superior to avoiding or ignoring the press. My approach to the press is to be proactive in working with reporters. If a story is going to be made public, I'd rather be the one to explain it and keep the press updated. This way I can set the tone of the article, rather than the reporter assuming information. Because of these relationships I am positive that all the reporters I have worked with will agree that there is nothing in my background that would be a surprise or embarrassment to Juno Beach.

Every manager knows that social media can be used as a weapon against staff, elected officials, and projects that are being discussed by the town. In the last couple of years, I have taken a very proactive approach to social media. A social media coordinator has been hired by me. Because of this change, we now have an opportunity to address rumors on almost every site. We now have a presence on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X. We also have a tab on the city website for

Section 6**DARREN COLDWELL**

questions. We do not respond to comments on any website, but we do release factual information when it is necessary. We have also just recently created a virtual magazine called Page Happenings. This monthly magazine gives different departments, as well as me, an opportunity to discuss what is happening in their departments. In just four months of being created, we already have over eight hundred subscribers.

Anyone who has been in local government for very long will tell you that we all have our naysayers. I am no different, but I believe each of them respects my commitment to follow the directives from the City Council and they would never take the time to call to speak badly of me.

In my free time I enjoy flower gardening and lawn work, a special reason I am excited about the opportunity of Juno Beach. I especially enjoy working in the dirt with my roses and flowerpots. I am proud to say that I am a very good cook and baker. I spend time on the weekends baking different breads for the upcoming week. My wife and I also enjoy traveling and attending concerts in different cities. Our kids are spread between Montana and Arizona, so we plan most of our vacations in these two beautiful states.

SIX ADJECTIVES OR PHRASES THAT I WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE MYSELF

- Great Communicator
- Experienced and Talented Leader
- Responsive to Problems and Staff
- Outstanding Customer Service
- Highest Ethical and Integrity Commitment
- Exceptional Problem Solver

REASON FOR WANTING TO LEAVE CURRENT POSITION

I am looking to leave my position as City Manager of Page because I believe that the opportunity in Juno Beach offers a new challenge for career growth. Also, Juno Beach is a place that my wife and I would be honored to call home. We are looking for a place that we can make a long-time commitment to and a place that wants a stable manager for the future of the town. In addition, the upcoming changes in city leadership in Page, following the decision of the long-time Mayor and Councilors to not seek re-election, makes this the right time for me to look for a new opportunity in a region we love.

CURRENT SALARY

My current salary for the City of Page is \$178,200, not including benefits.

Section 6

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
DARREN NEWELL COLDWELL**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County	
Kane County, UT	No Records Found
Coconino County, AZ	No Records Found
Lincoln County, MT	No Records Found
State	
Utah	No Records Found
Arizona	No Records Found
Montana	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County	
Kane County, UT	No Records Found
Coconino County, AZ	No Records Found
Lincoln County, MT	No Records Found
Federal	
Utah	No Records Found
Arizona	No Records Found
Montana	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

Utah No Records Found

Credit

Excellent

Personal Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Sex Offender Registry

Not Listed

Education

Confirmed

Employment

Confirmed

Social Media

Nothing of Concern Found

**Background Check Summary for
DARREN NEWELL COLDWELL**

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
DARREN NEWELL COLDWELL
Personal Disclosure**

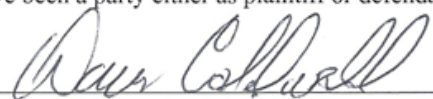
Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: DARREN COLDWELL

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes No
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes No
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated, driving under the influence, operating a vehicle impaired, or a similar offense?
Yes No
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No
8. Please list all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one. Facebook, Instagram
9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No
10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

Attested to: 
Signature of Applicant

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Mark Comier - City Council Member, City of Page, AZ 480-452-9895

Mr. Comier has known Mr. Coldwell since 2019 when he hired Mr. Coldwell to work as the City Manager. Mr. Comier worked as a City Council Member.

Mr. Coldwell has exceptional job performance. He never did anything questionable and proved fiscally responsible. He kept the City Council informed on expenditure and budgeting. His coworkers enjoy working with him and he makes good decisions when hiring personnel. Everyone Mr. Coldwell hired still works there. He heavily participates in the process of hiring Managers and Directors with the panel interviews and gives good feedback on candidates. He also makes good decisions in general, always keeping the organization's best interest in mind.

Mr. Coldwell is a problem-solver who can lead a team in solving a problem. For example, the City has a yearly hot air balloon event. One year, outside vendors fought over who got control of what. Mr. Coldwell had to deal with this and bring the issue to the Council's attention. He made changes to the event to limit vendor scope while also creating a fairer process for vendors, thus eliminating vendor infighting.

Mr. Coldwell handles the different elected officials with their different agendas well. He makes sure the outcome of a project matches the City Council's priorities. He understands the City must match certain priorities in its charter, goals, and objectives. He steered the results to meet these priorities.

Mr. Coldwell proves himself innovative, a change agent, and someone who maintains an organization at a high-performance level. He gave ideas for changes and improvements for the organization. Overall, he looked for people's strengths and did not shy away from moving employees to where he thought they would perform best.

Mr. Comier would hire Mr. Coldwell if he could and thinks Mr. Coldwell is a good manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Knowledgeable,
- Thoughtful,
- Competent,
- Valuable,
- Well-tempered, and
- Fiscally responsible.

Strengths: A good manager with strong communication, organization, and financial skills.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Bill Diak - Mayor, City of Page, AZ 602-499-8733

Mr. Diak has known Mr. Coldwell since 2020 when they started working together for the City of Page. Mr. Diak works as the Mayor and Mr. Coldwell works as the City Manager.

Mr. Coldwell works well with the Council and Town Hall gave him an above-average performance review. He deals with several different personalities with different agendas daily. He adapts his communication style based on who he is talking to. He can read the Council's desires and how they want to receive information. He bases his delivery approach on that.

Mr. Coldwell is innovative and a change agent. Since he started working for the City of Page, staff morale has tremendously improved. Before he arrived, Mr. Diak described the morale as low. Mr. Coldwell improved this issue by holding weekly meetings with his Directors and taking care to acknowledge staff accomplishments. Not only does he praise staff when he runs into them, but he also communicates their accomplishments to the Council. With more recognition for a job well done, staff report a more positive working environment.

Mr. Coldwell makes good decisions when hiring personnel and makes good decisions in general. He keeps Mr. Diak informed of what happens in his area of responsibility by talking in person on an almost daily basis. He also meets individually with each of the Council Members to keep everyone up to date.

Mr. Coldwell is a leader in the sense that he takes the organization's vision and rallies the employees around it. He manages the Strategic Priorities and delegates appropriately to ensure the organization meets those priorities on time. He is very hands-on with his Directors but does not micro-manage the staff's day-to-day responsibilities.

Mr. Coldwell solves problems. For example, he recognized that he needed to adopt a more hands-on approach with the staff to improve morale. He addressed this personnel problem by changing the way they thought about upper management throughout the corporation. In the sense that the staff has more trust in management to help them achieve their goals and give them recognition for their accomplishments.

Mr. Coldwell often goes out in the community and attends most major functions. He attends meetings representing the organization with the League of Towns, community meetings, and the city manager association. He makes staying in touch with the rest of the county a priority.

Mr. Coldwell is an outstanding manager. He has a strong work ethic and spends the time he should in the office. He is always one of the first people to arrive in the morning and one of the last people to leave in the evening. He has earned a great reputation in the City. Mr. Diak would absolutely hire Mr. Coldwell if he could.

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Efficient,
- Professional,
- Outgoing,
- Technical,
- Detail-oriented, and
- Diplomatic.

Strengths: A great manager who comes from an accounting background and excels at managing finances.

Weaknesses: He could improve his communication skills when interacting with colleagues on a personal basis.

Rachell French - Director of Human Resources, City of Page, AZ 928-660-9055

Ms. French has known Mr. Coldwell since 2019. Ms. French works as the Director of Human Resources for the City of Page. Mr. Coldwell works as the City Manager.

Mr. Coldwell does an amazing job as a City Manager. In particular, he excels at getting a city team and outside groups to work together. He has done a good job with the City Council and the School District.

Mr. Coldwell genuinely cares about the people he works with and fosters a positive work environment. He makes good decisions when hiring personnel and good decisions in general. Ms. French has not worked with another City Manager as good at their job as Mr. Coldwell. She does not want him to leave the City of Page. He would be missed.

Mr. Coldwell proves himself innovative, a change agent, and someone who maintains an organization at a high-performance level. He acts as a leader in the sense that he takes the organization's vision and rallies the employees around it. And he can also manage from behind the desk and make sure organization processes run smoothly. Mr. Coldwell does not micro-manage his employees. He keeps Ms. French informed on what happens in his area of responsibility. He has weekly meetings with all his direct reports and maintains an open-door policy.

Mr. Coldwell can solve problems. For example, the organization had a couple of instances where different departments did not work well together. He worked with his Directors to address the issue, so everyone could start working in a cohesive way. After addressing the issue, people started to work together more effectively.

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Mr. Coldwell handles different personalities very well. He works with several elected officials with different agendas daily. In meetings, he brings the facts and reminds officials why they chose to do things a certain way. Mr. Coldwell presents the reasoning behind his decisions and keeps his cool in high-stress environments.

Ms. French would hire Mr. Coldwell if she could and knows he is a great manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Kind,
- Strategic,
- Personable,
- Problem solver,
- Customer service-oriented, and
- Financially responsible.

Strengths: A good manager with strong budgeting and finance skills. He also showcases great interpersonal skills and encourages his employees to have a work-life balance.

Weaknesses: Can work on having difficult conversations with employees before behaviors become a problem.

Josh Smith - City Attorney, City of Page, AZ 307-884-9000

Mr. Smith has known Mr. Coldwell since about 2019. Mr. Smith works as the City Attorney for the City of Page. Mr. Coldwell works as the City Manager.

Mr. Coldwell does a good job as the City Manager. The Council has expressed its approval of him many times. He gets along well with his coworkers with his easygoing and personable demeanor. He makes good decisions when hiring personnel and in general.

Mr. Coldwell keeps Mr. Smith informed of what happens in his area of responsibility. Mr. Coldwell usually loops Mr. Smith in when things need a legal review. They communicate mostly by phone and email. Although, they do have in-person meetings when necessary.

Mr. Coldwell proves himself innovative, a change agent, and someone who maintains an organization at a high-performance level. He cares and wants to do a good job with any task he sets out to do. He is a forward thinker. He is a leader in the sense that he takes an organization's vision and rallies the employees around it. The City Council sets the vision and then Mr. Coldwell directs the organization to achieve those goals.

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Mr. Coldwell can lead teams in solving problems. For example, he realized the organization needed to modernize its systems by initiating online payments, updating websites, and making those experiences more user-friendly. Mr. Coldwell asked the different departments to update their processes to make them easier for the public to use. The modernization proved successful. Mr. Coldwell took the vague description that the Council gave him for the “modernization initiative” and created a clear, actionable plan.

Mr. Coldwell goes out into the community often and regularly attends community meetings representing the organization. He integrates into the community and works with other organizations as well.

Mr. Smith would hire Mr. Coldwell if he could. Mr. Coldwell is a great manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Personable,
- Hard worker,
- Caring,
- Genuine,
- Outgoing, and
- Dependable.

Strengths: A manager who has strong budgeting skills and can make quick decisions without falling into analysis paralysis.

Weaknesses: Making decisions too quickly.

Bryce Anderson - Superintendent of the School District, City of Page, AZ 623-826-9318

Mr. Anderson has known Mr. Coldwell since 2021. They have worked together in a professional capacity. Mr. Anderson works as the Superintendent of the School District for Page. Mr. Coldwell works as the City Manager for the City of Page. They work closely together on issues related to the community.

Mr. Coldwell did an outstanding job as the City Manager. Prior to his arrival, Page had significant challenges with its finances. Mr. Coldwell improved the finances and expanded services to local residents including capital improvements, a splash pad, a community pool, tourism, housing, and childcare.

Mr. Coldwell solves problems. For example, the City had an issue with a school district pool that was no longer operable. Citizens wanted to bring back the pool, but the expense made it not a fiscally responsible option. Mr. Coldwell then found someone who could bring a community pool to the city and started that project. He was instrumental in moving the project forward. This

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

ordeal proved controversial because some people did not understand the funding piece that would go into constructing and operating a pool. Mr. Coldwell looked at the situation multi-dimensionally and found a creative solution with a community pool, rather than repairing the school district pool.

When it comes to working with other people, Mr. Coldwell proves himself personable and able to handle a variety of different personalities. He works with different elected officials with different agendas daily. To keep the working environment productive, he allows everyone to have a voice and keeps the objectives to build a consensus around issues related to the community. Even when the Council does not agree with his ideas, he always operates respectfully and professionally.

Mr. Anderson would hire Mr. Coldwell in a heartbeat and knows he is an excellent manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Positive,
- Communicative,
- Consensus-builder,
- Visionary,
- Fiscally responsible, and
- High character.

Strengths: A personable manager who is reliable and communicates clearly.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Judy Franz - Head of Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center, City of Page, AZ 928-606-5829

Ms. Franz has known Mr. Coldwell since about 2020. Ms. Franz runs the Page Chamber of Commerce and the Visitor Center. Mr. Coldwell works as the City Manager for Page.

Mr. Coldwell exhibits excellent job performance. He thinks outside the box and always looks for the best way to do things. He is patient, customer service-oriented and community-oriented. Ms. Franz is highly impressed with Mr. Coldwell's professionalism.

Mr. Coldwell makes good decisions when hiring personnel. He picks out the best candidates and can identify how their strengths will benefit the organization. Since coming to the City of Page, he hired some of the best employees the organization has ever had. He brought the Department Heads up to a better standard overall. Mr. Coldwell also made good decisions in general.

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Mr. Coldwell proves himself innovative, a change agent, and someone who maintains an organization at a high-performance level. He handles change well and helps the organization adapt. He keeps the course and works towards moving projects forward. Mr. Coldwell shows leadership by taking the organization's vision and rallying the employees around it. He is a team player.

Mr. Coldwell can lead a team in solving a problem. For example, the City worked hard on the downtown revitalization and recreation center. He and his team faced much opposition to the project from a small population of citizens. He had to adapt and work through the issues to get the projects done. He also put together Town Hall meetings and brought the community and project planners in the same place, so everyone could be on the same page. By addressing their concerns and answering their questions, Mr. Coldwell did a good job appeasing the small population of opposing citizens. He went out in the community often and regularly attended community meetings representing the organization. He is customer service oriented and maintains an open-door policy.

Mr. Coldwell is a good manager and Ms. Franz would hire him if she could.

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Focused,
- Team player,
- Organized,
- Leader,
- Communicative, and
- Follows through.

Strengths: A strong leader or is organized and focused. Excels at creating a good team that works well together.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Marcia Borris - County Attorney, Lincoln County, MT 406-293-2717

Ms. Borris has known Mr. Coldwell since 2017. They worked together for Lincoln County. Ms. Borris worked as the Lincoln County Attorney and Mr. Coldwell worked as the Lincoln County Administrator.

Mr. Coldwell had excellent job performance as a City Administrator and Ms. Borris was sad when he left the position. She has not seen another administrator who has had as much impact as Mr. Coldwell. He interacts professionally and respectfully with his coworkers.

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Mr. Coldwell makes good decisions when hiring personnel. He supervised the Human Resources Department when he worked as the County Administrator for Lincoln County. He also makes good decisions in general.

Mr. Coldwell proved himself innovative, a change agent, and someone who maintains an organization at a high-performance level. The County needed to get into a better place financially. He realized the County was still paying insurance on vehicles it no longer owned because no one canceled the policies. He saved the County over \$50,000 by canceling insurance on these vehicles. He fixed this administrative oversight and made sure the County ran efficiently.

Mr. Coldwell kept Ms. Borris informed of what happened in his area of responsibility. They worked together mostly in budgeting. Mr. Coldwell proved communicative and met in person with Ms. Borris on a daily basis.

Mr. Coldwell shows leadership by taking an organization's vision and rallying employees around it. He often went out in the community and regularly attended community meetings representing the organization. He used to hold the title of Mayor in the Town of Troy. He got along with everyone and made himself known as a community leader.

Mr. Coldwell would make a fantastic addition to any organization, especially in an administrative capacity. Ms. Borris would hire him if she could.

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Thorough,
- Conscientious,
- Positive,
- Fiscally responsible,
- Pleasant, and
- Efficient.

Strengths: A great administrator who cares about the people he works with and builds a positive work environment.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Robin Crowther - Clerk and Recorder, Lincoln County, MT 719-580-1688

Ms. Robin has known Mr. Coldwell since about 2016. Ms. Crowther interviewed and hired Mr. Coldwell as the County Administrator. She worked as the Lincoln County Clerk and Recorder. They worked in different departments, but both presented to Commissioners. They discussed complex issues with each other before taking their ideas to the Commissioners.

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Mr. Coldwell's job performance was amazing in Lincoln County. He took over the budget and excelled at finding creative solutions to financial problems. He acts personable and professional when interacting with coworkers.

Mr. Coldwell also works well with handling different elected officials with different agendas. He balanced out the personalities by taking discussions back to the goal. People enjoyed working with Mr. Coldwell.

Mr. Coldwell proves himself innovative, a change agent, and someone who maintains an organization at a high-performance level. He had to come up with a detailed County Budget from scratch. He improved the organization by boosting employee morale and creating a positive working environment.

Mr. Coldwell acts as a leader in the sense that he takes the organization's vision and rallies the employees around it. He also does well with managing processes to ensure the organization runs smoothly.

Mr. Coldwell can solve problems. For example, the County needed to figure out its finances. The timber and mining revenue streams shut down. He had to cut the budget by \$100,000 from lack of revenue so the County would not go into debt. He rallied the Department Heads and built consensus around a financial plan that addressed the shortages but allowed the employees to keep their benefits.

Ms. French would hire Mr. Coldwell if she could.

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Friendly,
- Hard-working,
- Solutions oriented,
- Team player,
- Takes direction, and
- Professional.

Strengths: A personable manager who can handle complex situations like the budget with ease.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Reference Notes Darren Coldwell

Tammy Anderson - Chair Member, City of Troy, MT 406-396-9627

Ms. Anderson has known Mr. Coldwell since about 1990. Mr. Coldwell owned a property Ms. Anderson rented for her business. They also worked together in the Troy Chamber of Commerce on civic duties.

Mr. Coldwell has excellent job performance and follows through with everything he says he will do. He made a huge difference in the community as a Volunteer Mayor. He made good decisions when hiring personnel and made good decisions in general. He often went out into the community and regularly attended community meetings representing the organization with a customer service attitude.

Mr. Coldwell can solve problems and handle complex tasks in a timely manner. For example, he found himself in charge of the City's Fourth of July celebration. He managed all the moving parts including preparing the grounds, measuring and assigning spots for vendors, organizing logistics, and communicating with the City Police to ensure safe traffic re-routing.

Ms. Anderson characterizes Mr. Coldwell as a patient individual and would hire him if she could. He is a great manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Darren Coldwell:

- Polite,
- Nice,
- Honest,
- Hard-working,
- Congenial, and
- Professional.

Strengths: An honest and hard-working person.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Prepared by: Hazel Jones
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
October 9, 2024

Page Infrastructure

Part 2: Balancing priorities

By Bob Hembree

When word got out that the City of Page received a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), people started talking. The city had already saved enough funds to match the EDA grant. It was part of the deal. So \$11 million originally intended for the Streetscape project seems up for grabs to some. It's the old, hypothetical, "What would you do with a million dollars?" scenario, a chance for armchair city planners to decide how to best spend the money, regardless of what the experts recommend after months of studies, evaluations and consultations.

In Page, the mayor and council members are expected to make reasoned decisions on behalf of the city they represent. They are not experts, nor are they expected to be. Still, they must make major decisions on policies, projects and Page City finances. Councilor Kenna Hettinger summed it up best: "I think that the responsibility of City Council is to give direction to the experts. Have the experts come back with their recommendation so that we can understand the pros and cons of each path forward and then make the best decision." In other words, an effective councilor must grasp and evaluate information presented by experts in various fields and decide what is best for the community.

Non-experts often have good ideas, but ideas need evaluations, comprehensive studies and planning. The city needs experienced, well-informed expert input. Only then will councilors have enough reliable information to make informed decisions to authorize or not authorize large investments, like how to spend \$11 million and do it within the perimeters of federal grant agreements.

While the independent group, Page Forward, is actively exploring Page revitalization options, city administrators are waiting to see what the new city council looks like in November and which direction they decide to go. All council candidates agree on most issues like workforce housing and water infrastructure. They differ on uptown revitalization. Several of the candidates and mayor-elect Steven Kidman opposed making changes to Lake Powell Boulevard, which is at the heart of J2 Engineering & Environmental Design's "Streetscape" project. Even if anti-Streetscape candidates lose their bids for council seats, moving forward is thorny.

Last week, in part one of the Page Infrastructure series, the Chronicle reported on the unknown maintenance needs lurking below Lake Powell Boulevard. When the city's main street is repaved, all five lanes or however many lanes are decided, the piping, conduit and wiring beneath must be inspected and paths forward evaluated. The city must be prepared for the worst and in a position to act quickly. They don't want to affect the integrity of new pavement by cutting it up to fix a broken sewer line, electrical malfunction or a damaged water pipe. There's

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

also the expense of bringing the sidewalks and intersections up to ADA code (Americans with Disabilities Act). Even though there's \$11 million for the revitalization, it's unknown how much will be available for aesthetic improvements like nicer sidewalks, benches and rotundas. Of course, if Page's current economic growth continues, as it has with the current administration and council, finding more funds shouldn't be a problem.

One argument voiced at council meetings is balancing the workforce housing shortage with bringing in new business. How do you grow when workers can't find or afford homes? A balance is needed, otherwise businesses are perpetually short handed. The result is poor service quality and tainted reputations.

Under City Manager **Darren Coldwell** and the council before the two recent councilor resignations, over 120 new homes were added in Page. "By the end of 2026, we are expecting the national economy to turn around to bring the interest rates and inflation back to some kind of normalcy," said Page Planning Director Zach Montgomery. "And if that takes place, then we are projecting a minimum of 300 new single-family dwelling units in the City of Page to have been built by the end of 2026. We're looking at least half of those and probably 75% to be workforce housing. That's what we're working toward in our negotiations with the developers. "The type of housing or dwelling units that are in those projections include apartments, single family homes, duplexes and condominiums and townhomes."

When asked about investors snapping up new homes for short-term rentals, Montgomery said, "The primary benefit of the city owning the majority of the property within the city limits is when we sell that property to a developer, we have the ability to negotiate with them on the number, or percentage of housing, that's to remain open for workforce." A property acquisition agreement is used up front to ensure homes are for the workforce. Montgomery said the city is currently doing this with a Cold Spring subdivision. "They're agreeing to build those homes and to sell them for workforce housing as a part of the agreement."

The City of Page isn't as myopic as some residents have expressed in council meetings. The city has the resources and expertise to accomplish multiple tasks simultaneously. Now, it's a waiting game. What direction will the 2025 City Council go and what is going on under Lake Powell Boulevard?

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Darren Coldwell** is listed below.]

City/County Management Association
A State Affiliate of ICMA
2024

Leadership
2024 Board of Directors

Darren Coldwell – Director – City Manager, Page

Darren Coldwell has a rich and diverse background, transitioning from a successful business owner to a proficient public servant. **Darren**'s education from the University of Montana likely equipped him with the necessary knowledge and skills to excel in his professional endeavors, providing a strong foundation for his career. His tenure as City Manager of Page, Arizona, since 2019 has been marked by notable achievements and contributions to the community. **Darren**'s career trajectory showcases his adaptability and leadership skills. Starting as a business owner in Lincoln County, Montana, he transitioned smoothly into public service as the County Manager for the same county before joining the City of Page.

Under **Darren**'s leadership, City Parks in Page have seen significant enhancements, likely contributing to the quality of life for residents and attracting visitors. The development of new biking trails aligns with contemporary trends towards outdoor recreation and promotes tourism while encouraging healthy lifestyles for residents. **Darren**'s efforts in improving the financial stability of the city budget demonstrate his fiscal responsibility and strategic planning abilities, essential for effective governance. Winning awards such as the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) reflects the city's commitment to transparency, accountability and sound financial management under **Darren**'s leadership. **Darren**'s successful management of projects like the roundabout on Highway 89 highlights his ability to navigate bureaucratic processes and secure funding for critical infrastructure improvements. Completion of projects like the Page Master Plan and rezoning of the Page Proper indicates **Darren**'s commitment to long-term strategic planning and sustainable development.

Darren's role in revitalizing the Lake Powell National Golf Course and expanding amenities like the Pro Shop and Mulligans Restaurant and Bar demonstrates his focus on economic development and enhancing recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Under **Darren**'s tenure Page has exceeded 5 million visitors, surpassing even the Grand Canyon. Page has also become the state's largest European booking city, and the Asian is a close second.

Darren Coldwell's track record of success and his ability to spearhead diverse initiatives indicate his effectiveness as a leader and his dedication to the well-being and progress of the community he serves.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicles
August 29, 2024

Council adopts Code of Ethics

By Bob Hembree

On Aug. 21, Page City Council adopted a Code of Ethics. The code covers disclosure of conflicts of interest, respecting confidentiality, meeting attendance and conduct in public. “Conduct of Members,” for example, states, “The professional and personal conduct of members must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the Council, commissions, boards, committees, staff and the public.”

“This is a working document and hopefully Council looks at this as a living document,” said City Manager **Darren Coldwell**. “As you go around and as you travel, if you see something that you would like to introduce to this and you think it's a good idea, I think it's very appropriate for you guys to bring it forward to the Council. As we continue with this with the boards and the commissions, it's going to give you some teeth to have more oversight with the president and vice president or the chair and vice chair.”

“I think it's really helpful. I think it helps us understand our role. I think it gives the citizens understanding of what we're trying to do, what the boards and commissions are trying to do,” said Councilor Kenna Hettinger. Mayor Bill Diak said, “It adds accountability to Council.”

The code passed unanimously after **Coldwell** and Hettinger helped Councilor Steve Kidman understand some of the code’s language. It was Kidman’s first meeting as a councilor; he is completing Brian Carey’s term and will become mayor in November. Diak told the Chronicle all council members signed the document after the meeting.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
July 24, 2024

Communication Breakdown
Part Two: United by Misinformation
Bob Hembree

Misinformation takes many forms. Often it's creating false context around a grain of truth, a false narrative that derives from a superficial knowledge of a subject or intentional misdirection. Sometimes it's reframing an issue, drawing attention to cherry-picked aspects while hiding others, never giving a true representation of an issue. The most dangerous form of misinformation creates anger, pits people against each other, tribe against tribe, us-versus-them. A common theme throughout history is Citizens versus City Hall. Right or wrong, politicians and city officials are easy targets, easy to dehumanize.

At the June 18 City Council Candidate Debates arranged by the Page-Lake Powell Chamber of Commerce, candidate Tom Preller said, "A PR person, a social media manager, that is very much steps in the right direction. If you get a good feed coming out of the city of all the government ongoings, allow comments, allow input and questions to be asked, and allow that PR person to respond with factual information and sources cited, that's the only way you can do anything about misinformation is to correct it and back it up."

"There's so much misinformation out there, no matter what you do," said candidate Craig Simmons. "I guess the only way the city can combat misinformation is by putting the right information out. Without the right information out there, anywhere on social media or anywhere else, then all people think about is the hearsay. And of course, the hearsay always travels a lot faster than the right stuff." "Putting out correct information is the best way to combat misinformation," said candidate Amanda Hammond. "I think the city is already taking good steps in that direction by hiring a social media manager as well as [a] public relations manager. I think that they can go farther; overhauling the website needs to be done."

Speaking on the city's website, Vice Mayor John Kocjan said, "We need to put it in a smaller, concise form because that's what people are going to read, not have to read through all the minutiae that's out there."

The Chronicle spoke with Councilor Richard Leightner. As longtime Page resident, he's seen both sides of us-versus-them play out in local politics. "At that last councilor debate, I heard so much stuff come out that wasn't anywhere near true," said Leightner. "If you're going to run for council, why don't you get informed about everything and not just go with hearsay or what's on Facebook or whatever."

One of the most common threads in Page misinformation is not knowing what the city council can and can't control. Cities must abide by county, state and federal laws. For example, the 2016 Arizona Senate Bill 1350, enacted by former Governor Ducey, made it illegal for cities, towns,

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

or counties to prohibit short-term rentals. City operations are handled by the city manager. Councilors are not experts in everything they must make decisions on. They depend on the advice of experts, the pros and cons, then vote. The city manager sees that council's decisions are carried out. According to Mayor Bill Diak, past councils ignored expert recommendations and the city suffered for it. He said occasionally somebody comes along who thinks they know everything. They lead people astray. "There's a couple times in the history of the city where council basically did not listen to their city manager and their city staff, finance department, their economic development departments," said Diak. "Both times we've ended up in deep, deep financial trouble. And that's what I inherited when I first came into office in 2010." Speaking of the city's current financial state, Diak said, "We are one of very few cities in the state of Arizona and probably other states that is totally debt free and has money in the bank to do projects."

Before the Chronicle interview, Leightner said he spoke with the city manager and city department heads to verify his understanding of a variety of topics to dispel misinformation spreading through Page.

The US 89 Roundabout

Another misconception is that the city council can build a roundabout on US 89; that's in Arizona Department of Transportation's (ADOT) domain. "It really irks me when somebody says, 'Well, the city council did this or the city council didn't do this,'" said Leightner. "And especially on the roundabouts, there was talk that city council was holding up the roundabouts. And the plain and simple fact is those are a function of the State of Arizona, not the council, not the city. So we can make an application, like for the roundabout down here on the north exit, but we can't say when to do it or if it can be done. We just make the request. It was approved for this fiscal year, but we don't have any control over when. But we have heard that they're going to start breaking ground on that this fall. So we will have a second roundabout in Page."

The Swimming Pool

People spreading misinformation often exaggerate or minimize depending on which best supports an agenda or increases outrage. For example, a person claiming a 6-page court document is "very, very brief" if they are on the losing end and seeking to minimize the process leading to the decision, or someone claiming a swimming pool will cost citizens \$116 million when estimates are from under to \$15 million. "They were talking about exorbitant amounts of money for the swimming pool," said Leightner. "I have no idea where they got that. We bonded and we approved with public review to go out and get a bond. And even if the bond's \$15 million, it doesn't mean that we have to spend \$15 million. We want to put in a nice, usable, shareable with the schools swimming pool that does the job for what's needed.

"And the location of it, my goodness, we're going to put it down by the sports complex. That's where it should be. That's where the splash pad is gonna go. So that's gonna be the big recreation area. It's already started that way. And then they were talking about, 'Well, gee, how's our kids gonna get down there? You know, that's dangerous and stuff.' Well, my first answer to that is how do they get down to the ballgames that they go to three or four times a week? But apparently they haven't looked at the budget we just approved. We're going to pick up a shuttle

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

service and we're going to run a shuttle to Horseshoe Bend. The stops will be designated and we're pretty sure, certain that they can put a stop in for the sports complex. So there's not going to be the big issues that they're making up.”

Horseshoe Bend Funds

Money taken in at Horseshoe Bend can only be used for Horseshoe Bend. It’s an enterprise account like Page Utility Enterprises. Think of it as a separate entity, a separate business. The city can bill Horseshoe Bend for services provided, like accounting, police or maintenance staff. But the funds can’t be used for projects not related to Horseshoe Bend. “They are definitely restricted,” said Leightner. “We can’t take a million out of Horseshoe Bend funds and go do infrastructure over by the Marriott or up by the airport. Because that has nothing to do with Horseshoe Bend. So those are totally different budgeted items.”

Housing

Under the current City Council, City Manager **Darren Coldwell** and staff, 122 new homes were added in Page since January 2023. “That’s 122 keys, brand-new doors that have been opened in the city of Page,” said **Coldwell**. “So I think there is a misconception that nothing is happening on housing out there. There is stuff happening.”

Currently, the city is working with Coconino Community College (CCC) on new housing. Apartments for students and workforce below CCC are in the works with a developer. “It could be in three phases if they go all the way with what they're talking about,” said Leightner. “And it’ll be a pretty nice, pretty large development. Really, really nice. So we're working on housing. And I can tell you that all the present council members are dedicated to housing. We’ve got to get that done.”

Talks are also in progress with Habitat for Humanity for a cluster of small homes. Reaching out to Habitat for Humanity was suggested by Page Unified School Board President Sandra Kidman at the April 24 council meeting. Councilor Brian Carey and Leightner began talking with Habitat for Humanity Executive Director Eric Wolverton shortly after and gave a public council meeting presentation June 12.

Uptown Revitalization

Uptown revitalization and Lake Powell Boulevard are at the center of the most divisive and costly misinformation circulating in Page. A small group of citizens circulated a mixture of facts and misinformation through the community. They circulated petitions with misleading and false claims in an effort to block changes to Lake Powell Boulevard and to recall city councilors. Page Action Committee (PAC) leaders repeatedly claim 6,000 people signed their “survey” petition. What they leave out is that multiple people circulated the petitions within a 50-mile radius of Page. No attempts were made to verify if signers were Page residents. The signatures weren’t verified. When they did ask if signers were registered voters on a second petition for a ballot initiative, less than 800 signed and 18% of them were rejected in a random sampling.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Misinformation about the cost of Phase One of the “Streetscape” project is often two to three times the actual cost. “There’s a rumor that the current project is \$36 million,” said **Coldwell**. “It is closer to \$11 million and we have nearly \$5 million already saved and are very confident that we will receive a federal grant for an additional \$5 million.” The city began setting aside funds for the project three years ago. A letter dated June, 11 from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) notified Planning and Zoning Director Zachary Montgomery that the city’s grant application was reviewed and selected for further consideration. “I have also heard we are going to get rid of the Town House and Community Center,” said **Coldwell** “That is untrue! We are actually putting nearly \$200k into improvements for the Community Center this year.”

While reasonable arguments against some of the proposed Lake Powell Boulevard changes were made, they were tainted by misinformation and the combative behavior of a few PAC supporters in council meetings and social media. Possibly the most harmful and misleading action taken by PAC members was the recall petition used against Councilors David Auge and Mike Farrow. The Chronicle interviewed PAC chair Debra Roundtree Sept. 16, 2023 when talk of a recall began. “To me, until they take a stand and there's a vote, I don't feel like we should start removing people from office yet,” said Roundtree.” Otherwise we're just making assumptions as who will or who won't vote for it.”

Auge and Farrow voted against proceeding with Phase One of the Streetscape project. They learned the same night of the vote that they were the only councilors on the recall ballot. Auge and Farrow are the only ones not running for reelection because their terms don’t end until November 2026, so it could put PAC members in a position to take over the city.

Not one of the petition’s three sentences citizens were misled to sign were true.
Sentence 1: “For refusal to acknowledge constituent's over 1,550-signature opinion petition presented on September 27, 2023, to a regularly scheduled city council meeting where they were included on a public agenda concerning lane reductions to Lake Powell Boulevard thereby affecting citizens' daily lives and businesses.”

The statement is false. Roundtree was acknowledged at the Sept. 27, 2023 City Council meeting. Council allowed her to give a 27 minute presentation on why Lake Powell Boulevard should not be changed. The city also assisted Roundtree, projecting her stock slides to accompany her presentation. Farrow said the city clerk recorded it, therefore acknowledged it. The meeting including Roundtree’s presentation is available on the City of Page YouTube channel.

Sentence 2: “For refusal of allowing all his constituents the democratic process to vote on a matter potentially costing the citizenry 15-30 million dollars and making drastic changes to the major Main Street-Lake Powell Boulevard and choosing to represent therefore a fraction of his constituents by refusal to allow discussion or consideration allowing citizens to vote on proposed lane reductions to Lake Powell Boulevard during City Council meeting on October 25, 2023.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The statement is false. The PAC ballot measure to stop Lake Powell Boulevard development was not blocked by the city council; the petition did not meet Arizona constitutional requirements. It was never a council decision. Coconino County Superior Court confirmed the Page City Clerk’s determination and ruled against PAC. PAC filed an appeal and the Appellate Court ruled against PAC.

Sentence 3: “For refusal of allowing his constituents the democratic process by accepting their initiated ballot measure that had enough signatures and allowing his constituents to go to the ballot box in July 2024 to voice their opinion about Lake Powell Boulevard being reduced to 3 lanes.”

Sentence 3 is redundant. It repeats false accusations stated in sentence 2.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Darren Coldwell** is listed below. Omitted was the detailed information about other small towns/cities in Arizona.]

Arizona Daily Star, The (Tucson, AZ)
May 1, 2024

Rural communities struggle to keep young residents

Author: Sarah Lapidus and Lacey Latch

San Luis native Armando Esparza did what many young people in rural Arizona do: He left his hometown for the big city. Esparza moved from the agricultural community on the Arizona-Mexico border to study at Arizona State University and lived in Phoenix to build his career. Ten years later, he moved back to San Luis to work as the director of the city’s economic development department. “I was able to find a job opportunity where I can apply what I have learned in my years of economic development, and most importantly, I am able to grow,” he said about why he chose to move back. “This is not the case for a lot of people, but I was lucky.”

Esparza’s experience a decade ago is still common. That’s illustrated in a recent report gathered by Local First Arizona, a rural economic development nonprofit. The organization in 2023 surveyed 440 young people up to 25 years old, with more than 70% of participants under 18 years old. In the report titled “Perspectives from Youth and Young Adults of Rural Arizona,” eight out of 10 respondents said they must leave their hometowns to find a quality career opportunity. Young people pointed to job quality and the lack of affordable housing as detractors in their small communities, the majority of which have populations well below 10,000 people. Rural city and town officials also stressed the lack of affordable housing, which they see as the primary obstacle forcing young people to leave. But the consequences of that familiar story were upended when the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

Rural communities see pandemic boom

At the state's other end lies Page, with a population of 7,400 people who live just a handful of miles south of the Arizona-Utah border. It’s renowned for its access to famous outdoor attractions like Lake Powell and Horseshoe Bend. Closure of the Navajo Generating Station in 2019 was a major employment and economic loss. But the city doubled down on its destination marketing during the pandemic to attract visitors. Page has seen 24 consecutive months of tax growth, City Manager **Darren Coldwell** said. “We have spent the money to chase the buck, and it's paid off,” he said.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows the population of small cities and towns across Arizona was largely unaffected by the pandemic. While each of the municipalities in this story suffered a dip in population at the outset of the pandemic in 2020, they each stabilized in 2021. In most cases, that stabilization led to growth in 2022, according to the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program. But leaders across northern Arizona also acknowledge they can’t rely on tourism forever, especially as the allure of Historic Route 66 fades from memory. “Eventually there's going to be a time where no one knows what ‘Standing on the Corner in

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Winslow, Arizona' is," said Winslow city manager David Coolidge, and the city needs to prepare for that. City leaders are trying to highlight the unique opportunities presented by Winslow's location in northeast Arizona — access to Interstate 40, the BNSF railway and a regional airport that could propel it into a future as a trade hub for the southwest. Construction on the I-40 trade port, a nearly 4,000-acre advanced logistics and manufacturing park, has recently begun in the city.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: **Darren Coldwell** is not mentioned in this article, however because he was the City Manager at the time of the lawsuit filing, we have included it.]

Lake Powell Chronicle
April 17, 2024

PAC sues Page over rejected petition
By Bob Hembree

The Page Action Committee (PAC) filed a lawsuit against the City of Page. The PAC attempted to stop proposed improvements to Lake Powell Boulevard with a ballot petition. According to a response letter sent to PAC chairperson Debra Roundtree, the rejected petition didn't meet constitutional prerequisites.

During the public comment period of the April 10 Page City Council meeting, Roundtree said, "The next suit that we'll be filing will be an injunction. So that's what I'm here to talk to you about tonight, is that we have a list of concerns that we've been bringing to you as board members. We've been trying to convince you that we're concerned about open meeting law violations, other violations that are going on. And then if you would look at the record for the past seven to 10 years, as I have, of the open meeting Freedom of Information Act, you would see that there are some glaring inconsistencies. And our lawyer originally worked for the Attorney General's office, so he's helped us be able to identify some open meeting law things that we have concerns about right now."

Roundtree made multiple claims and accusations that were refuted by city officials, including one that a contractor bid was awarded for Lake Powell Boulevard improvements. The bidding period was still open at the time. A winning bid must first be approved by council in a public meeting. That didn't happen. She also claimed landlords were "being told not to rent to somebody," but offered no details.

Then she complained about a Facebook post. "Our biggest concern," said Roundtree, "And I don't know if the rest of you are OK with this, but Councilman Carey chose to post the letter and part of it that you guys sent to my PAC on Saturday." She explained she was out of town and didn't immediately receive the notification. "Before even 24 hours was up, you had a council member who was posting the letter that you sent us on social media," Roundtree continued. "I don't see how that's OK. My legal team didn't have time to look at it. Our donors didn't have time. Our PAC didn't have time to meet it. But social media already had that letter. So we know that there are some legalities there. Those things are not OK."

Carey acknowledged the post reply and explained to Roundtree that the documents she referred to are public records and he had quoted from the rejection letter to provide information that was left out of social media posts. "Miss Roundtree brought up a response I made to a post by Chuck Straub, who I assume is affiliated with the PAC," said Carey. "And the comment that I made was to give the reason that the city had rejected the PAC request for an initiative that was referred to

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the PAC in a letter from the city. That is a public document. I asked for permission to quote from that public document to make sure that the post on a particular Facebook group was accurate, and I did so. And so that's the facts of that matter. Public document, a public post in response to a post by a member of the PAC, which left the reasons out. So I just wanted to throw the facts out. It's a pretty simple reason for the rejection, as has been referred to here. So just want to clear the record on that.”

Coconino County court documents verified Debra Roundtree, Steven Kidman and PAC are taking legal action against the City of Page. Both parties are running for Page City Council seats next election. Their legal counsel is asking the Coconino Country Supreme Court to compel the City of Page to process a rejected petition. The political action committee is represented by Jim Barton of Barton Mendez Soto PLLC in Tempe, Arizona.

A hearing presided by Judge Cathleen Brown Nichols is scheduled for 2 p.m. April 18.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
March 20, 2024

Page Police to provide safety officers to PUSD

By Bob Hembree

On March 13, Page City Council approved an agreement between the City of Page and Page Unified School District (PUSD) to provide school safety officers. PUSD received an Arizona Department of Education’s Stronger Connection Grant to cover the costs for the 2023 - 2026 school years. Page Police Department doesn’t have the staff to provide PUSD a full-time officer, so the agreement is flexible. Officers can work extra-duty hours on their time off to make extra money.

“This opportunity, is a fantastic especially for some of the new officers,” said City Manager **Darren Coldwell**. “I’m almost embarrassed what a starting salary is for a man who puts a bulletproof vest on every single day. So this will give them an opportunity to bring in some extra cash.”

The city will bill PUSD \$85 an hour for the service. Part of the rate covers administrative, vehicles, insurance and other expenses. Page Police Chief Tim Lange told the Chronicle officers receive a flat rate of \$64 per hour for extra duty services. “The kids will get to know our people,” said Lange. “If the opportunities arise where our officers can teach classes or even sit in classrooms while certain subjects are being taught, that's going to be a benefit for us. It's a benefit for the kids. It's a benefit for the school.” When Lange was approached by the school, he thought it was a great idea. The flexible agreement is based on officer availability. It’s understood an officer may need respond to an off-campus emergency. “At the end of the day, our primary job is to answer those calls for service and respond to public safety issues,” said Lange. “All this other stuff is extra, and yeah, it's going to give our guys the opportunity to make some extra money, but what's important to me is it's going to enhance school safety.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
March 20, 2024

Page Business grants are back on the table

By Bob Hembree

Page City Council discussed bringing back a revised version of its facade improvement program. Little interest was shown by local businesses in applying for the 50/50 grants to update their storefronts. City Manager **Darren Coldwell** believes the amount of red tape and qualifying conditions made the process too troublesome and expensive for businesses. an “It's daunting, to say the least, for the applicant,” said **Coldwell**. “I would like to put a lot more responsibility on Zach and Brett to do some of this rather than a licensed engineer and you know that they have to spend more money than what the money is they're going to spend on the project.”

Coldwell referred to Planning Director Zachary Montgomery and Building Official Brett Slavens. In **Coldwell's** proposed plan the city would match the cost of store improvements up to \$20,000. The previous plan was only available to uptown businesses along Lake Powell Boulevard and Block 17. All businesses in the city limits can apply with the new plan. Another change is the scope of qualifying projects. **Coldwell** suggested going beyond exterior improvements. “I think it should be both inside and outside and I think it should be every business,” he said. “I don't think it should just be Main Street. Anybody who wants to improve their setting should have the opportunity.”

Councilor Richard Lightener indicated at least two businesses he's familiar with are “highly interested” in the program. If an overall dollar amount is approved by council, the funds will likely be available in next year's budget

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
March 6, 2024

Council increases city manager spending authority

By Bob Hembree

On Feb. 28, Page City Council voted 6-1 in favor of increasing city manager spending limits from \$20,000 to \$100,000 for budgeted items. The move follows the Jan. 10 council decision to increase Page Utility Enterprises (PUE) board and manager spending limits to \$600,000 and \$300,000 respectively. The central arguments for the increases were rising prices and increasing management efficiency. In the past, items preapproved by council in the city's budget would require a second approval if manager spending limits were exceeded.

Counselor Theresa Lee cast the dissenting vote, citing long term concerns. "It's nothing against **Darren**," said Lee, referring to city manager **Darren Coldwell**. "It's for (the) future, because we all come and go, and then we look at it after somebody's already had access to it. I have a problem jumping \$80,000. I really do. And I realize we're seeing things that we've authorized. However, as things are increasing in price, we want to see that the \$20,000 lawn mower that we approved in June of last year is now \$50,000. We want to see that. So I have a problem jumping 80 grand. I'd be more comfortable at 50."

Counselor David Auge, countering Lee's argument, said "I'm sorry, but it boils down to trust. We hired **Darren** for his past accomplishments, what he's been doing for us. And I'm sorry. If we don't trust him now, then he needs to pack his bags and be gone. And as far as I'm concerned, I trust **Darren** and have faith in him, his track record for us. And going forward, as I say, I trust him." Vice Mayor John Kocjan, supporting Auge's comment, said, "It's in the budget or it's not. It's that simple."

Coldwell reassured Lee, "Theresa, I'll be very responsive to your concerns, even if it's just going to you." "Thank you," said Lee. "And I know you would. That's why I said it's not against you."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
March 6, 2024

Council caps Emergency Reserve at \$12 million

By Bob Hembree

On Feb. 28, Page City Council voted to cap the city’s emergency reserve fund at \$12 million. On July 24, 2019, six months before COVID-19 shook the world, the fund was established to keep the city running in an emergency.

The fund, following Finance Director Linda Watson’s recommendation, began with \$8 million, \$6 million in an existing reserve and \$2 million from the general fund. In 2019, council wanted enough in the reserve to run the city government for one year. Watson, addressing the council, said, “Our expenses for the last 12-month period were right about \$12.2 million for the general fund so this amount is inclusive of operating and personnel cost but it does not include interfund transfers. At this point there are various motions; as you can see on this council communication, it would be my recommendation if it is the council's pleasure to increase that \$3.5 million reserve to \$8 million as one option.”

At the time, Watson said setting aside the full \$12.2 million would stress the city’s finances and recommended gradually building up to the full amount. Council agreed and the fund was established with an important stipulation: Accessing the money would require a 75% council majority.

Currently, the fund is \$11.2 million, according to City Manager **Darren Coldwell**. He anticipates reaching \$12 million by the end of the year. “I mean, we went through COVID and we never touched it,” said **Coldwell**. “We made some hard choices.” He pointed out that the city makes adjustments in spending when needed.

“We've had a few ups and downs, but we continue to grow,” said Mayor Bill Diak, then asked **Coldwell**, “How many months in a row?” **Coldwell** replied, “Forty-six months in a row of increased tax revenues, even through COVID.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Darren Coldwell** is listed below.]

Targeted News Service (USA)
December 1, 2023

Arizona Public Service Co.: Arizona Electric Utilities Provide Grants to Support Economic Development, Operations & Training in Coal Plant Communities

Author: Private Sector

Arizona Public Service Co. issued the following news:

Five organizations serving Arizona communities impacted by the transition away from coal-fired power plants were selected this fall to receive a cumulative total of over \$134,000 in economic development grants from the Utilities' Grant Funding Program. The program provides critical support to communities near impacted coal plants to develop new, sustainable economic strategies for their residents and other stakeholders. Funding is provided by Tucson Electric Power (TEP), Arizona Public Service (APS) and Salt River Project (SRP). This is the program's second round of grant awards made in 2023.

The City of Page will receive \$25,000 to help cover the costs of hiring a grant-writing consulting firm to prepare applications for larger federal grants. The firm is also identifying additional grant opportunities to support transportation and economic development efforts, including broadband and community facilities and business incubators. "I want to thank our Arizona utilities that so generously contribute to this grant so that small communities like Page can do good work for their residents," said **Darren Coldwell**, City Manager. "Without the generosity of the Utilities Grant Funding Program, we would never be able to partner with such a firm."

TEP, APS and SRP pledged a combined \$1 million in awards available through the Utilities' Grant Funding Program. Area-specific tribal, state and local governments, public schools, economic development groups and nonprofit groups are eligible to apply. More details about submission eligibility and requirements are available here (<https://www.srpnet.com/grid-water-management/grid-management/improvement-projects/coal-communities-transition>). The third grant application cycle is now open. Applications are due by Friday, Dec. 15, 2023.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
September 27, 2023

The City of Page awarded Best 2023 Cybersecurity Score

By Bob Hembree

The City of Page belongs to many organizations geared toward better governing and management, including Arizona Municipal Risk Retention Pool (AMRRP). One of the benefits of an AMRRP membership is a Bitsight testing, evaluation and security rating.

Speaking at the Sept. 13 City Council Meeting, City Manager **Darren Coldwell** said that Page has the “highest score in the AMRRP pool.” “Basically, they tried to attack Kane two years in a row, and he was the best in the state,” **Coldwell** said, referring to City of Page Information Technology Director Kane Scott. “Page was No. 1, most efficient, couldn't get through.

There are 70 members in the AMRRP pool. In fact, Page is better than 90% of the government agencies nationwide.” “This is really, really a big deal because, I don't know if you see how everybody from Russia to China to Asia, they attempt to attack local agencies and then hold them for ransom,” **Coldwell** said. “They just attacked Phoenix hospitals, and I still don't know what they're going to do, if they're going to pay or what they're going to do. To be able to deflect those guys that know what they're doing is a pretty big deal.”

There were over 263 million ransomware attacks worldwide in the first half of 2022. A whopping 71% of organizations worldwide were affected by ransomware attacks in 2022.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
September 27, 2023

Page’s Streetscape plans under fire
Part Two: When citizens start to object late in the process
By Bob Hembree

“It’s hard to back that train uphill and not have costs involved with it.” – City of Page Mayor Bill Diak

The Streetscape project, after of years public notices, open house presentations and gathering community input, is the talk of town. Some are hearing about it for the first time, and judging comments at the Sept. 13 city council work session, some are outraged.

City of Page Mayor Diak told the Chronicle that Page Lake Powell Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in reaching out to local businesses about Streetscape in the exploration stages of the project. “[They were] saying, hey, this is what’s going on. This is when these meetings are. Please participate, because the city and [those] doing the legwork for us are seeking information on what they’re proposing and your input,” Diak said. “When that plan started, there was nothing for that street [Lake Powell Blvd]. It was developed out of those meetings, and there [were] people in City Hall up and down. The whole hallway was filled with charts and everything. Matter of fact, we ought to get those charts and just paste them up before the next meeting.”

Streetscape became the project title once J2 Engineering was hired in 2020. The city took its first steps in November 2018 under the name Downtown Revitalization Plan. The first public meetings were held Dec. 3 and 4 from 5-7 p.m. at the Page Community Center. Lake Powell Chronicle covered the story in their Nov. 28, 2018, issue. According to the Steven Law’s reporting, “The downtown revitalization area includes North Lake Powell Boulevard from highway 89, block 17 (which is the block containing Mesa Theater, Boston’s Hardware, Pow-Wow Trading Post and other businesses), the Safeway block, the businesses along 6th avenue and John C. Page Park. “One of the city’s strategic priorities from fiscal year 2016/17 was initiating a master streetscape plan which identified strategies, policies and feasibilities for improving the aesthetics and appeal for Page’s downtown and block 17.”

In the 2018 article, Levi Tappan, Page’s mayor at the time, said, “I hope to get the businesses on board and excited about this and together turn it into a real nice, walkable downtown.” “The people who built this town also built a dam and a power plant,” he said. “They are men and women of industry. I’d like to find a way to honor that history and heritage and incorporate that as we re-brand and revitalize the town.”

Tappan hoped the design would reflect Page’s modern-industrial heritage. The Chronicle spoke with the Tappan again on Sept. 15, 2023. He still likes the modern industrial theme for Page. The former mayor is also considering another run for the office in 2024. Residents objecting to Streetscape at council meetings voiced a wide variety of concerns, many based on

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

misinformation. The most common complaint was the proposed changes for Lake Powell Boulevard. The owner of R D's Drive-In is worried about parking and delivery truck access. According to Debi Roundtree, Antelope Canyon tour companies are concerned about traffic congestion slowing their tour shuttles. “Our major players on the mesa, who are probably bringing more tax dollars than anybody else, can't continue their tour businesses,” said Roundtree. “If they do what they're doing, they have to move off the mesa. And the reservation's been trying to convince them to put businesses out on the reservation so they get the tax dollars. And so they're angry enough now that they could do that. And this isn't going to just hurt the City of Page a little. It's going to hurt it huge if they do that. One company says they won't be able to operate the buses correctly and how they have to enter and exit their business. So, he said I won't have a choice. He said I will have to move off the main street.”

The Chronicle asked Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell** about how the changes in Lake Powell Boulevard would affect the tour companies. “Streetscape is designed to create and incentivize business,” **Coldwell** said. “It's not being created to hurt business whatsoever. Our traffic study, which there were some misconceptions in a way, there were some misstatements Wednesday evening [at the council meeting], and the traffic study was done June 29 and June 30 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. So the week basically before the fourth, one of the busiest weeks of our year. It found that it was going to slow traffic down about 4.8 seconds from North Navajo to South Navajo compared to what it is now. “[The tour companies] come out with two stoplights left, and so you got a block and a half that they have to go. It shouldn't really affect them. If it's that bad for a block and a half, then we really will have a problem, but it's designed not to.”

Coldwell stressed he is willing to listen to concerns and that adjustment are possible if warranted. He's said this at all public hearings regarding Streetscape. Executive Administrative Assistant Robin Crowther is frequently seen handing out contact information at city council meetings. “I've spoken to three people. Three people have, after all of these comments, 1,100 signatures, three people have come in to speak with me,” **Coldwell** told the Chronicle on Sept 16.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
September 5, 2023

New Code Red alert system helps Page residents stay informed

Bob Hembree

The City of Page is making it easier for residents to stay informed and to receive Page-specific emergency alerts. City Manager **Darren Coldwell** first announced the new system at the June 14, 2023, city council meeting. “Kane has been working on, under my direction and under the police and fire, a new alerting system for the City of Page in case there's ever an emergency,” **Coldwell** said.

The new Code Red system is now operational. The online software, in addition to sending emergency alerts, enhances the city’s efforts to keep Page residents informed about events and public meetings.

The Chronicle met with Page’s information technology director, Kane Scott to learn more. “What we want the citizens to know is if they go to the cityofpage.org website now, right below the main picture, is this emergency notification system,” Scott said. “And what this new system is doing is it's allowing them to not only get an alert if there’s something big emergency-wise, but it’s allowing them to sign up for community meetings – i.e., council meetings and whatever meetings and also events that are coming up. So the event people will be sending out reminders that the balloon regatta thing is today or we’re having July 4 or movies in the park or stuff like that. Simply by clicking on that, it takes them to an explanation page that tells them all about it.”

Page residents who don’t go to council meetings, read the local newspaper or visit the city’s webpage regularly are sometime surprised by city projects in the works and protest. Uninformed citizens often hear development news long after advertised public meetings were held, long after months or years of time and public funds were invested. In other words, uninformed citizens potentially waste public resources.

Page’s updated website demonstrates its transparency and its efforts to keep community members informed on every aspect of city government. Online visitors can browse the city’s finances, read the minutes of council and board meetings, or read the discussion and action agendas scheduled for upcoming meetings.

“People are still saying that we're not getting enough information out, but we’re trying very hard to put this data everywhere,” Scott said. “We're trying to do more ‘instant.’ So something that goes in the mail, you might not get or you get late. This will do even more. So they’ve just got to sign up.”

Code Red is free, and users have the option to receive notices by text, voice or email. The basic setup includes emergency alerts like unsafe water warnings or building fires. Emergencies in Page might be rare, but citizens can also choose to receive event and public meeting reminders.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The system is still new to Page, and more data will be loaded for upcoming events and meetings. Scott said the alerts and reminders will be brief and include links for additional information.

City Council meetings provide downloadable “PDF Agenda Packets” that are often quite large. The Aug. 23 packet, for example, is 139 pages of text, images and diagrams – too large for a text, phone or even an email message. “Everything is based off the website,” Scott said. “You can easily get to all of the public meetings. And the other button we made even better, ClearGov, which is a revenue project, expenditures and your tax dollars at work. If you click there, then you can get in and see – I mean, you can literally go to our checkbook and search.”

Scott wants all Page residents to go to cityofpage.org homepage, “click on the emergency notification system and sign up.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Arizona Daily Sun, The (Flagstaff, AZ)
May 4, 2023

Recycle pickup to resume Monday as city occupies facility, pays Norton \$75,000

Author: Adrian Skabelund

As of 8 a.m. Thursday, the City of Flagstaff occupied the recycling facility on Butler Avenue that had been operated by Norton Environmental for more than two decades. Hours later, city employees in reflective vests and hard hats could still be seen milling about the grounds, assessing the condition of the space and preparing to turn it into a transfer facility.

The move came after solid waste section head Evan Tyrrell and public works director Scott Overton informed Flagstaff City Council the city would be looking to bring recycle pickup back online as soon as Monday. At that same special meeting, Council voted unanimously to approve the termination of the lease and contract with Norton Environmental and to transfer control and ownership of the facility and equipment back to the city. The termination agreement approved by city council came with a \$75,000 payment to Norton for transfer of the facility and termination of the original contract. "This payment, we feel, is justified as it is very expensive and costly to not have a home to take our recyclables to," Overton told Council.

The president of Norton Environmental, Joseph Balog, said the payment is in lieu of what could have been an estimated \$250,000 payment from the city this year. Estimates from city staff had that payment closer to \$450,000 for this year. That payment would have been for failing to meet the minimum amount of recyclable material the city agreed to deliver Norton within the original contract. Throughout the contract with Norton, the city has only ever been able to collect and deliver a fraction of the recycled material promised within the contract. Bolag said Flagstaff routinely owed Norton for undelivered material at the end of each year.

"Under the terms of the contract, Flagstaff had a minimum amount of material to deliver to the plant yearly. Typically Flagstaff owed Norton over \$350,000 at the end of each contract year under the contract minimum," Balog wrote. "In an agreement made with the city, Norton accepted \$75,000 to terminate the contract, and each party agreed to release the other party with no further liability between Norton and the City of Flagstaff." Under the original contract, Norton had control and ownership of the facility, but that would have reverted back to the city when the contract ended in September. Balog also confirmed that the combination of the facility fire last week and the weak market for recycling led to the sudden closure of the facility, which employed eight people at the time of its closure.

Several councilmembers and City Manager Greg Clifton applauded the work of city staff in working so quickly on the matter. "It's been around-the-clock involvement," Clifton said. "I find it remarkable to say the least that we are now occupying this facility as soon as [May 4]. I would not have thought that was within the realm of possibilities here." The city is now working to convert the facility quickly into a transfer center so materials can be collected, brought to the site and loaded onto a truck and brought to Phoenix. Converting the facility into a simple transfer

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

station won't take much, Overton said. Because sorting through the recycling will all take place in Phoenix, the only equipment they really need is a scale to weigh the truck and recycled materials, and heavy equipment such as a front-end loader to move the materials from the collection vehicles to the semi truck. Those operations will likely be contracted out as well, although city employees might be onsite to oversee the operations, Overton said.

That facility, operated by the City of Phoenix, has already agreed to begin taking materials from Flagstaff, despite the current lack of a signed intergovernmental agreement between the two municipalities. A signed agreement is expected within the month. With the question of where recycling materials will go solved, the remaining question is just how to get it there.

Overton said the city is quickly looking to find a company to begin trucking the materials down to the Valley. He said that will likely be a shorter-term contract as a stop-gap measure just to get service back up and running. Once that is achieved, the city will seek a longer contract to get a better deal for the city and taxpayers. This short-term solution is expected to be in place for three to four weeks, bringing recycling pickup back while giving city staff time to draw up longer-term contracts.

Overton said it was too early to tell what the price tag on a short-term contract for such a service would be. If a company to bring materials to Phoenix can't be lined up, recycle pickup will still resume on Monday, but materials will be brought to the landfill. Overton and Tyrrell, however, seem confident that transportation could be located in time.

Even so, Tyrrell said in that circumstance, the city might be able to store the materials until they can be brought to the Phoenix facility at a later time. But is Flagstaff unique in its recycling woes in terms of northern Arizona communities? It's a mixed bag. The City of Williams doesn't offer its residents residential recycling pickup. Residents can opt to drop recyclables off at the transfer facility in Williams themselves. Those materials are then delivered to the company Waste Management in Flagstaff to process, a Williams sanitation manager said.

Up in Page there are currently no recycling services available to residents or commercial businesses, said Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell**. That city contracts with the company Republic Services to collect trash. Republic Services had offered recycling services to residents as well, but **Coldwell** said after industry changes forced the company to truck all recyclables to a facility near Las Vegas, the company removed the recycling service. The city has been without recycling services for about a year and a half. It should be noted that both communities, as with most across northern Arizona, are significantly smaller than Flagstaff.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
March 13, 2023

Page City Council mulls cost of recreation center
Douglas Long

Support for the construction of an indoor recreation and aquatic center has been growing in recent months among many residents of Page. Last week, City Manager **Darren Coldwell** led a discussion by City Council that sought to address one of the biggest questions pertaining to establishing such a facility in Page: How will it be paid for? The March 8 meeting, which was open to the public, was attended by around 25 local residents.

Coldwell provided an overview of the recreation and aquatic center but also, more importantly, the financial aspects of the project. He made it clear that the meeting was just the first step in the process of deciding whether such a facility could or should be built. “Even the drawing that you’re going to see is literally just myself and a couple other people working with an architect to project what we were thinking might be an asset to this city,” he said. “It’s going to take a lot of time and a lot of effort from staff to make this thing go, and if it’s not something council is sincere about or wants to pursue, we don’t want to put in the time and effort.”

The “drawing” **Coldwell** referred to was an architect’s rendering of what the recreation and aquatic center might look like, based on suggestions from community members concerning what they would want included. The 44,000-square-foot facility was designed in three separate squares so that it could be built in sections. The first section includes offices for working staff, a gymnastics and dance room, a weight room, a babysitting room, a climbing wall and a room available for social functions or for teaching classes. The second section encompasses two racquetball courts, four batting cages and two basketball courts, with four locker rooms that would enable the facility to host basketball and volleyball tournaments. The third section includes a six-lane, Olympic-size lap pool where swim meets could be held, as well as a kiddie pool. The plan also includes an outdoor lazy river, the only portion of the facility that is outside and therefore seasonal.

The cost of building the facility as presented would be at least \$37 million, **Coldwell** said. He added that Page’s budgeted excise tax revenues for the 2022-23 fiscal year were around \$16.9 million, far short of the funds necessary to build the facility. On top of this would be annual operating costs, estimated to be around \$2.5-2.8 million, for necessities such as liability insurance, staff and maintenance. The only option for coming up with the funding would be for the city to go out to bond and into debt, **Coldwell** said. “This is where, as a city manager, I start to worry and potentially can’t sleep at night. Page is one of the few cities, probably literally in the United States, that has zero debt,” **Coldwell** said. “This, going forward, is going to commit for probably 25 years the people on this dais and the people that sit in my chair to quite a bit of debt and how to pay for it going forward.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

A \$37 million bond for 25 years would mean about \$2.5 million taken out of operating funds each year. This could also be paid for by increasing city sales tax – in which case, costs would be shared by the city’s 5 million visitors as well as its citizens – or through a general obligation bond, in which the residents of the city pay would through an increase in property tax. “The problem that council has is, can you sell that? Can you sell to the residents of Page that every single home here is going to get that amount of value out of this facility?” **Coldwell** asked council members. “It all depends on how much you guys support this facility and how well you sell to the people in the audience. The senior citizen is going to have to be shown they they’re going to get their money’s worth out of this project.” After presenting the financial data, **Coldwell** said he wanted the City Council to give directive for him to create a citizens committee comprising six to eight people “who are sincerely interested in the project and sincerely are willing to give their time to this.”

Reactions to the city manager’s presentation were mixed. Councilor David Auge said he thought that going out to bond would not be “very palatable” for the city, especially considering current inflation rates and the likelihood that the city’s electricity rates will increase by 40% between July and January. “You said raise your hand and raise the sales tax,” Auge said, referring to the ability of City Council to vote on a sales tax increase, but “the other hand is going to be grabbed by the citizenry and we’re going to be ... tarred and feathered, probably.”

Mayor Bill Diak suggested that other funding sources could be tapped to minimize the financial damage, including philanthropy, donations and grants. **Coldwell** said the grant process has already begun, with funding for rural communities offering the best prospects for the proposed facility.

Councilor Brian Carey said he totally supported having a recreation center in Page, and his priority would be building the aquatic section first. “No question, this is a passionate project, number one on my list. It’s what I ran on, and I will support it until someone kicks me off the council,” he said. “The reason we added to the pool concept is because our current city’s facilities are not supporting what we want to do with our youth programs and our adult programs. And the school, through their own set of pressures, have been unreliable partners in sharing facilities.” He suggested that money could be taken from the city’s current emergency fund to reduce the amount of debt needed to build the facility. “In my opinion, we’re sitting on an emergency fund that’s continuing to grow by over half a million dollars every year, is not going to be needed because I can’t anticipate a worse situation to affect our tourism than the pandemic,” Carey said. “There is more money that could be removed from that emergency fund if we capped it at the original concept of \$8 million, which is about 60% of our operating budget and would handle any issues.” Carey agreed with **Coldwell** on the need for a citizens committee to help “mine all of the ideas and the sources” that could help steer the recreation center project in the right direction. “I do think the citizens are going to put some skin into the game for that. I also think that this council needs to decide. If we’re going to have this, we need to pay for something because it’s not going to be free. There’s no question,” he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Councilor Mike Farrow said the recreation and aquatic facility would help the city establish structured youth programs, which he believes are necessary, but he added that he didn't think the council was at a point where it could say "yay or nay" to the project. "We don't understand the footprint yet and how do we wrap the cost to the footprint. I do believe that a committee should be started, and it should have more homework done on it. They should look at a broader area of funding, they should look at getting a broader area of services," he said. "I'm concerned because we're still looking at our water supply, we have other contingencies that are not COVID-based, but we do have to weigh the overall – where's our water, where's our power?"

Since the March 8 meeting was not scheduled for any action or direction, Diak adjourned after an hour-long discussion with the expectation that the issue will return as an agenda item at a regular City Council meeting in the near future.

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Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

City of Page, Arizona
FY2023 Budget
Last updated October 31, 2022



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July 01, 2021

Christopher P. Morill
Executive Director

Budget Message **Darren Coldwell**, City Manager

Mayor Diak and Members of Page City Council: The annual budget assures the efficient, effective, and economic use of the City’s resources, as well as establishing that the highest priority objectives are accomplished. Through the budget, the City Council and staff set the direction of the City. The budget is expected to keep in mind both the positive and negative events happening within the City of Page. This document gives the City Council an ability to allocate resources and establish priorities. The Fiscal Year 2023 Budget is respectfully submitted to Mayor Diak, the City Council, and residents of Page, Arizona. This budget represents the City Council’s commitment to strong financial management practices and a strategic plan for continued growth and a sustained future. This budget document has been a collaboration between the City Manager, Department Managers, City staff, and members of the Page City Council to be used as a tool to identify funding priorities, reflect the needs and desires of the community, and to guide management throughout the year by clearly setting forth the goals and objectives of the Council for the coming year. As a whole, the City of Page is in a strong financial position considering the economic challenges that are currently in Page. The authorization of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act has helped stabilize funding for specific funds such as Emergency Services and Page Airport, albeit a temporary x to a complicated problem. Several problems have played a role in the economic future of our City including:

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

- High unemployment due to decreased tourism numbers and other tourism related jobs.
- The closing of the Navajo Generating Station.

Although these problems will take several years to overcome, there are signs of an improving economy, such as:

- Page’s tourism numbers have begun to increase, especially on the weekends.
- Many community groups are working to improve the economic situation in the City.
- A noticeable increase of interest in corporate leaders in the City of Page.
- An uptick of developers expressing wants to begin new planned communities.

The recovery process has already begun, which will enhance the goal of being a stable economy and consequently predictable steadfast revenues. The City of Page’s taxable revenue for the General Fund has been on a steady incline since the COVID pandemic eased in the last couple of years or so. Last fiscal year (2022) the City sales tax revenue increased by \$2.4M from the previous year (2021) where we received \$11.1 in Sales Tax Revenue. The City of Page has seen a record increase in sales tax contributions to the General Fund as of FY 2022. We closed the year with the highest number in sales tax revenue being received in one year thus far with a total of \$13,609,435. The City of Page once again saw a substantial increase in health insurance costs this year of around 12% that was added to this year’s budget. In reviewing the past performance of our policy, Page has been very lucky to be able to keep this cost down. For over the last five years, an increase of just over 2% was passed on to the General Fund budget. With this ever increasing expense, the City Council may need to consider a greater contribution from the employees. I will continue to review our policy and continue to entertain new options for employee health insurance coverage.

This fiscal year we re-evaluated our staffing needs, working with department directors, positions were added, or revised based on the department's needs. A reorganization of departments to increase efficiency has been implemented. The departments that have seen changes are Fire, Police, Public Works, Horseshoe Bend, Recreation, Library, Finance, and Lake Powell National Golf Course. In fiscal year 2022, the City budgeted 148 FTEs, a decrease of 3 FTEs from the prior year. This current FY 2023 shows our FTE’s of 161, an increase of approximately 13 FTE positions that were reduced in the last two fiscal years. It is of the utmost importance that the City Council continues to review all salaries and staffing needs for future budgets.

The City Council looked outside of the box and made creative thinking a must for the success of the entire City of Page this year. It is my opinion that with continued changes the City of Page will achieve its goal of being fiscally sound and revenue positive.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Arizona Daily Sun, The (Flagstaff, AZ)
December 31, 2021

Economy Year in Review: Airport fees, government grants and flooding fallout in Flagstaff
Author: Daily Sun Staff

This year marked an up-and-down endeavor for individuals, businesses and governments alike in trying to recover from the economic damage caused by the pandemic over the last 20 months. Here are the top economic stories for 2021:

Airport fees

Just this week, the Flagstaff City Council voted to approve an ordinance that would eliminate free parking at the airport and instead require travelers to pay up to \$8 per day and \$48 per week starting early next year. According to airport director Barney Helmick, charging for parking is necessary to pay for the \$4.9 million borrowed from the city's general fund to cover the construction of an additional parking lot and other improvements to the existing parking lot. The airport long outgrew the existing 385-space Terminal Lot. The airport has expanded significantly in recent years with multiple routes and more than 124,000 passengers departing from the airport in 2019, Helmick explained. The new lot -- dubbed the Terminal Economy Lot -- is currently under construction. It will more than double the number of parking spaces by adding 413 spots, ideally alleviating the parking overflow during the peak spring and summer seasons. The lot will also feature internal walkways and a sidewalk to the terminal. The addition of the new lot will also allow for further expansion of electric vehicle charging stations, bike paths and improve bus usage.

ARPA relief funding

Flagstaff City Council spent time addressing how more than \$13 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding should be spent, coming to a consensus on the budget in October. The budget includes \$1.9 million toward housing; \$2.5 million to alternate response services and a care center; \$1.5 million toward cyber security and other government infrastructure; \$1.4 million to nonprofit support; \$635,000 toward small business recovery; and \$600,000 to pre-K and STEAM education. The federal funding was allocated to the city from the State and Local Recovery Funds, which is a subset of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act and sets aside \$350 million intended to support state and local governments.

Flooding fallout

In its ongoing attempts to mitigate post-fire flooding in the Museum Fire area, Coconino County received two different \$3.5 million influxes of funding in the span of a week in November. First, Forest Service Chief Randy Moore announced the agency would provide funding for several flood mitigation projects below the burn scar. The announcement came after Moore and several other federal officials toured the Museum Fire burn area along with local county and city officials and Rep. Tom O'Halleran. Then, the Natural Resources Conservation Service approved the Coconino County Flood Control District's request for federal aid to help restore the Spruce Watershed and construct flood mitigation infrastructure below the Museum Fire burn scar. The

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

money will allow the district to build infrastructure in several areas of private property, largely in the area of the Elden Estates neighborhood, as well as one section of property owned by the City of Flagstaff.

Canyon entrance reopens

After almost a year of being closed, the Grand Canyon National Park reopened its east entrance to the South Rim in April. It had been shut down to limit travel and the spread of COVID-19 across the nearby Navajo Nation and other northern Arizona communities. That decision had been long sought by local business leaders and city officials in nearby communities including Page, who have pointed at the closure of the east entrance as one reason local economies are struggling. Page Mayor Bill Diak and Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell** told the Arizona Daily Sun that the closure cut off the city from the largest draw for tourism in the region. With the east entrance closed, tourists were forced to drive a roundabout way through Flagstaff if they wanted to visit Page, Lake Powell or Horseshoe Bend, so many simply opted not to, **Coldwell** said.

Electric vehicles

The City of Flagstaff continued work on its Sustainable Automotive Rebate Program in 2021 to promote sustainable practices in the community and to support the city's vehicle industry. As the rebate program takes its roots in the city and more electric vehicles hit the market, Jack Fitchett, Flagstaff business attraction manager, said dealerships will be supported in their efforts to bring electric vehicle models to consumers. It is one of a few strategies the city has implemented to encourage electric vehicle use. Fitchett said some local automotive dealerships have told the city they struggle with locals purchasing vehicles at dealerships in other cities, whether that's due to lower prices, tax incentives or a greater selection of fuel-efficient vehicles. The Sustainable Automotive Tax Rebate program looks to provide a level of support for these dealerships.

Great American Outdoors Act

Arizona projects got \$110 million last year and will get another \$159 million in the fiscal year that started in October, or more than 9% of all funding nationally under the Great American Outdoors Act for those two years. The money, dedicated largely to national parks but also to federal lands and tribal schools, has been welcomed by tourism and environmental groups, who said it is long overdue. For national parks, the backlog of deferred maintenance totaled \$11.9 billion in 2018, according to data from the National Park Service. More than \$507.4 million of that was for projects in Arizona, with \$313.8 million needed in the Grand Canyon National Park alone.

A boost to the arts

Rep. Tom O'Halleran announced in September that several entertainment venues across northern Arizona, many of which have struggled as COVID-19 forced events to be canceled, would be receiving federal aid through Shuttered Venue Operators Grants. "As a lifelong lover of music, I know that live performance and art have the power to heal, to bring us together, and to expand our world view, as well as the power to stimulate the economies of growing states like Arizona. Independent venues were some of the first places to close and the last to open; when we push

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

forward again as a nation, we cannot do so starved of the experiences that bring us together," O'Halleran said in a statement. In terms of Flagstaff organizations that received aid, the Flagstaff Symphony Association got \$19,100. Greenhouse Productions got \$148,917, Hullabaloo Festivals received \$108,099 and Peak Events was given \$208,317. Red & Black Productions received \$52,240 and the Orpheum got \$383,720. Lastly, Theatrikos Theatre Company is receiving \$68,594. Organizations in Page, Tusayan and Sedona also received federal grant money.

Construction projects

In an effort to stimulate a pandemic-stricken northern Arizona economy, the Coconino County Board of Supervisors approved a plan in February to move \$3 million of county projects to construction in the spring. The Public Works Stimulus Plan featured civil capital improvement road projects, almost 7 miles of pavement preservation projects, road maintenance equipment procurement, and crushing and blasting at the county's operated pits to produce road surfacing material. In addition, Public Works secured approval from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to resurface 10 miles of county-maintained school bus routes on the Navajo Nation as part of the stimulus plan.

NAU's impact

Northern Arizona University has long had a significant effect on Flagstaff's economy as a whole, and the university is currently navigating a decline in the number of students who are attending. NAU reported an enrollment loss of 4.2% (or 1,066 fewer students) in fall 2021 compared to the previous fall. Since the fall of 2017, the university's enrollment has decreased 10.8% (or 2,977 students). The report shows undergraduate enrollment increasing at the university from 2012 through 2018, and then declining since 2020. NAU's statistics in the ABOR Fiscal Year 2020 College Completion Report were similar to overall trends for Arizona public universities. The university saw a slight rise in undergraduate degrees, a continuation of its growth since 2010, the earliest data in the report. A total of 6,259 students graduated from NAU with a bachelor's degree in 2020, and 1,489 received a graduate degree. Degrees in health and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields had the greatest increase.

State jobless rate

Arizona showed several straight months of decreased jobless rate in the second half of the year as the state tried to shake off the economic effects of the pandemic. Job gains were spread across almost all categories, with the biggest increase in the leisure and hospitality industry that was battered last year by pandemic shutdowns and travel bans. Jobs in that sector grew 17.6% from a year earlier, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The most stark contrast to last year happened as the holiday shopping season began. The Arizona Department of Economic Security said there were 19,067 total jobless claims the week before Thanksgiving, compared to 404,748 in the same week in 2020.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Navajo Times
November 4, 2021

Page-Navajo aid agreement ends

By Krista Allen

An agreement to provide public safety services to Western Navajo ended on Sunday, leaving the large area near Page-Lake Powell vulnerable to potential criminal activity.

Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell** in September sent a letter to Navajo Police Chief Phillip Francisco saying the city would terminate the 2016 Mutual Aid Agreement between the Navajo Nation Police, the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, and the Page Police Department, if concerns were not addressed. **Coldwell** said neither Francisco nor Tuba City Police District Capt. Leonard Williams and Jesse Delmar, the executive director of Division of Public Safety, reached out to **Coldwell**'s office to resolve issues.

“The (Sept. 8) letter outlined some worries relating to emergency response by the city into Navajo Nation territory and the lack of appropriate agreements for the city response or requests for mutual aid,” **Coldwell** said in a follow-up letter to Francisco last Thursday. **Coldwell** said, “At the conclusion of the (Sept. 8) letter, it was politely requested that a meeting to discuss concerns and potential solutions be considered.” Rather than responding to his office, **Coldwell** said, Francisco talked to the Navajo Times. “The city was very disappointed to see that Chief Francisco chose to speak to the media instead of reaching out to the city directly,” **Coldwell** explained. “The city was further disappointed, and frankly confused, to see that (Francisco) publicly stated that Page resources ‘have rarely, if at all, in the last year or two, come onto Navajo Nation to take calls or assist us,’” he said.

Coldwell wrote in the Oct. 28 follow-up letter that the Page Police Department received 754 public safety calls for Western Navajo, 269 of which are calls within the last 24 months. The Page Fire Department and the EMS responded 910 times since 2016. “Had (Francisco) bothered to reach out and discuss the matter with the city as requested, the city could have shared these statistics and others that highlight the need for a change in the current practices,” **Coldwell** said. He added, “The city truly does not want to see our friends, family members, and neighbors on the Navajo Nation suffer due to lack of emergency response. “Nevertheless, the good people of LeChee, Coppermine and Kaibeto, among other (communities) are exasperated at the lack of public safety response to those areas of the reservation,” he said.

Working with chief, not city manager

Francisco said his police commanders are working with Page Police Chief Tim Lange to resolve issues, not **Coldwell**. Lange, who's Bilagáana, is a former Navajo Police officer. “We have a good working relationship with the chief (Lange),” Francisco said in an interview with the Navajo Times on Wednesday morning. “We'll come to a resolution between the captain (Tuba City District Capt. Williams) – because he's responsible for allocation of manpower and addressing issues in (Western). “And directly with (Lange),” he added. “We also have fire and

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

EMS from the Navajo Nation, and they're talking directly with their counterparts in Page also." Francisco said his team is trying to find a resolution for public safety in Western that works. "I don't think the Mutual Aid Agreement is in place anymore," Francisco said. "They would have to renew it. "But either way, without the agreement, we're still dedicated to protecting the citizens of both sides and co-responding – the police departments on both sides," he said, "to provide emergency services the best we can and work together in that area."

The Oct. 28 letter included a 53-page report of emergency service calls the Page police officers responded to in Western. "The concerns came from the two chiefs (Lange and Page Fire Chief Jeff Reed)," **Coldwell** said in a follow-up interview with the Times on Friday. "Their concern being the limited manpower that they have on their forces."

Coldwell said the Page police and EMS personnel have responded to emergency service calls in Western because if his staff doesn't do it, no one will, placing the city in a precarious moral position, which leaves the city without adequate resources for response. "We discussed it for a quite a while and kind of let it go," **Coldwell**. "With the antiquated mutual aid system that we had, I figured it was time to reach out to see if we could do something that was a little better for both of us. "The response time from the Navajo PD, it can take quite a while," he said. "We're hoping that maybe some of those services can return to the neighbors and we can start off on a fresh foot."

Coldwell said Francisco needs to send resources to Western. "There's an amount of frustration coming from our emergency services," **Coldwell** said in tears. "When we're not getting halfway, after a while you start getting frustrated. "As of Sunday (Oct. 31), our services won't be rendered up to the Navajo Nation any longer," he said. "Trust me, it's kept all of us awake at night, hoping Sunday never came. I hope the people of the Navajo Nation realize it was a very tough decision."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Navajo Times
October 7, 2021

Page threatens to stop responding to police calls from nearby rez

By Krista Allen

Threatening to stop responding to public safety calls in Western Navajo, the Page city manager wrote in a letter to the Navajo Police chief that the city will terminate an agreement made between the two agencies. Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell** last month sent the letter to Navajo Police Chief Phillip Francisco saying the city is terminating the 2016 Mutual Aid Agreement between the Navajo Nation Police, the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, and the Page Police Department. The purpose of the agreement is to provide mutual law enforcement personnel and resources in the event of a disaster, disorder, emergencies, or special requests for events in the respective jurisdiction. The agreement went into effect under then Page Police Chief Frank Balkcom Sr.

But **Coldwell** said, “The practical application of that agreement has proven to be unworkable for Page and does not provide adequate protections to the city or its law enforcement officers.” **Coldwell** said the city intends to terminate the mutual aid agreement on Oct. 31 when Page police officers would no longer respond to calls in Western Navajo. “Despite our concerns over the years, the city has responded to life threatening situations in an effort to assist people in need,” **Coldwell** wrote, “but without mutually beneficial modifications to the current circumstances.”

Coldwell said this has been an ongoing issue for years. While there has been some progress with law enforcement, **Coldwell** said the current practices and state of operations are not working for the city. “Currently, both police and emergency medical services personnel from the city are regularly dispatched to respond onto the Navajo Nation,” **Coldwell** wrote. “Historically, in an effort to be a good neighbor, the city has done its best to assist and respond.”

Coldwell said Page police and EMS personnel have responded because if they don’t do it, no one will, placing the city in a precarious moral position, which leaves the city without adequate resources for response. “Although we sincerely desire to be good partners and neighbors, the burden that the historic practice has placed upon the city’s resources is significant and unsustainable,” **Coldwell** said, adding that finite resources are not the only concern with the current practices.

Coldwell said city medical personnel often encounter dangerous circumstances, such as violent crimes, while responding to calls in the Nation. “In these circumstances, the patient either goes untreated or city law enforcement must assist because typically, the Navajo Nation law enforcement is unavailable to respond,” **Coldwell** said.

Navajo Nation Police Chief Phillip Francisco said the Page police officers though don’t quite respond to the calls in the Nation. “Page resources, which are fire and EMS, come out to help,”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Francisco explained in an interview with the Navajo Times. “They have rarely, if at all, in the last year or two, come onto Navajo to take calls or assist us. “A lot of those were taken by our (Navajo police) officers,” he said. Francisco said the letter was written without research, and if the city of Page and the Page Police withdraw from the agreement, it will hinder the ability to help them. “And that’s what these agreements are really for,” Francisco said. “It’s not for them to come do our job or come out and take calls, or we take calls for them. It’s mutual aid. “If anything major happens ... we want to be able to go out there and provide assistance and more officers to help out, and vice versa,” he said. “That’s what those agreements are for, so we have the coverage and authority to help each other but not do each other’s job.”

Coldwell’s letter says that Page police are regularly dispatched to respond to calls on the Nation. Francisco said that’s untrue, according to Navajo Police’s statistics. “Some of our police calls do get routed through (Page’s) 911 center but they’ll refer to our dispatch and our officers respond,” Francisco explained.

Francisco said while **Coldwell’s** letter is a little hostile, it shows cooperation from **Coldwell**. “From my staff – the police department is cooperative,” he said. “The (Page) Police Chief (Tim Lange) has a good relationship with my commanders. But I think this really came from the city manager without really helping anybody else.” Francisco’s police commanders want to maintain a working relationship with Lange and the Page Police Department.

The letter was copied to Page Police Chief Tim Lange, Page Fire Chief Jeff Reed, Tuba City Police District Capt. Leonard Williams, and to Jesse Delmar, the executive director of Division of Public Safety. Lange and Delmar did not respond to an interview request. **Coldwell** agreed to a follow-up interview but pulled back because of health reasons, said Robin Crowther, **Coldwell’s** executive administrative assistant.

LeChee Chapter has a police substation but it was temporarily closed because some officers had to be reallocated in Dilkon, Arizona. Francisco said the reopening of the substation is underway. There are 21 patrol officers in the Tuba City Police District. Francisco said TCPD rarely gets help from Page Police.

“Although the city is terminating the 2016 Mutual Aid Agreement, I’m requesting a meeting between our organizations to craft solutions for all interested parties,” **Coldwell** said. “I am optimistic that we can work together and find ways to provide needed services to the residents of both the city and the Navajo Nation,” he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Arizona Daily Sun, The (Flagstaff, AZ)
April 13, 2021

As eastern Grand Canyon Park entrance reopens, Page leaders breath a sigh of relief

Author: Adrian Skabelund

For the first time in just over a year, tour buses sat outside hotels in Page this weekend. Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell** told the Arizona Daily Sun he thinks that has a lot to do with a decision by Grand Canyon National Park last week. On Thursday, the Grand Canyon National Park reopened its eastern entrance to the South Rim of the park. That entrance had been closed since April 2020 as a measure to limit travel and the spread of COVID-19 across the nearby Navajo Nation and other northern Arizona communities. But with vaccination efforts in full swing across Arizona and on tribal lands, Park Superintendent Ed Keable made the decision to reopen the east entrance.

In a media release, Keable said he made the decision after consulting with both Navajo Nation leaders and the nearby Cameron Chapter. Previously, park officials had said the entrance wouldn't reopen until May. "As vaccine rollouts continue, we recognize the need to normalize our operations and allow for visitors to have a drive-thru option on Hwy 64," Keable said in a statement. That decision had been long sought by local business leaders and city officials in nearby communities including Page, who have pointed at the closure of the east entrance as one reason local economies are struggling.

Page Mayor Bill Diak and **Coldwell** told the Arizona Daily Sun last month that the closure cut off the city from the largest draw for tourism in the region. With the east entrance closed, tourists were forced to drive a roundabout way through Flagstaff if they wanted to visit Page, Lake Powell or Horseshoe Bend, so many simply opted not to, **Coldwell** said.

Page officials had been pressuring elected leaders and Keable to reopen the east entrance. "It's really good news for the city of Page. It has already made a difference, believe it or not. Our numbers at Horseshoe Bend increased drastically over the weekend," **Coldwell** said. "Foot traffic in town has increased. So, you know, I think we're going see some of those weekend people that we weren't seeing before." **Coldwell** said he believes several significant factors played a role in Keable's decision.

On March 31, the Navajo Nation Council voted to reopen tribal roads on the Navajo reservation to tourists and other visitors. That resolution was vetoed by Nation President Jonathan Nez, who cited the danger posed by new strains of the virus as a reason roads should remain closed. But **Coldwell** said he thinks the message carried by the council's vote was significant. Additionally, **Coldwell** said the Cameron Chapter supported the reopening of the entrance.

Last month, Gov. Doug Ducey also significantly pulled back on COVID-19 related restrictions, ending municipal mask mandates and eliminating occupancy limits for business. "I think [park officials] saw with Gov. Ducey dropping his restrictions and opening up the state, I think that

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Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

they realized that they were maybe a little bit behind the times for Arizona," **Coldwell** said. Mask wearing is required at all locations on the Navajo Nation. And not everything is back to normal at the park's east entrance. No services -- including food, gas, and the campground -- will be available at Desert View until further notice as staffing at the park is still a challenge. The nearest services available to Desert View are in Cameron, about 30 miles east of the Desert View developed area. Other services are currently available on the South Rim in Grand Canyon Village. Credit cards, Your Pass Now, and America the Beautiful passes will be accepted for entry. Cash will not be accepted at this time.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Associated Press State Wire: Arizona (AZ)
March 18, 2021

Push on for reopening of the Grand Canyon's east entrance

Author: Daily Sun Staff

Grand Canyon National Park officials tentatively plan to reopen the park's eastern entrance in late May, but there's sentiment in a small northern Arizona city that depends on tourism that sooner would be better. "Our sales tax for this year is down nearly 30% from last year," Page city manager **Darren Coldwell** told the Arizona Daily Sun. "Our Horseshoe Bend visitation is down 80%. So when we say that our numbers dropped off the face of the earth, they really did."

The Grand Canyon's eastern entrance and the highway leading to it, State Route 64, were closed last spring as a courtesy to the neighboring Navajo Nation, which was hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. The tribe's vast reservation in the Four Corners region has reported nearly 30,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 1,219 deaths as of Tuesday, when only two new cases and one additional death were reported.

A nightly curfew to help curb spread of the coronavirus remains in effect on the reservation but slowing of the outbreak has prompted the Navajo Nation to begin a partial reopening of some businesses and other facilities. Two of the tribe's four casinos will reopen Friday. Navajo Nation roads remain closed to visitors, but the Navajo Nation Council is considering a bill to rescind those closures — which don't affect the highway into the park.

Meanwhile, Page Mayor Bill Diak worries the highway's continued closure will do lasting damage to the city's economy and small businesses. For years, Diak said Page has marketed itself as part of a loop route for tourists visiting national parks and monuments in the Southwest. But with State Route 64 closed, the loop route has been disrupted. "People come out of Vegas, and they come in one way through I-40, and do the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, continue on up to do Page, Lake Powell, or they go on over to Monument Valley, come back in the other way," Diak said. "Both Utah and Arizona have marketed that for years, and then finally it has taken hold over the last three years. Now we're going to lose all that. For now, many campsites at the Page-Lake Powell Campground sit empty.

"Starting from spring break in March, for the last five or six years, our campground has been sold out every single weekend all the way into Thanksgiving," said Ron Colby, who manages the campground and a nearby bait shop. Colby said business has been down 78% compared to 2019. There were a few weeks last summer that approached normal occupancy levels, but that eventually dropped off. Diak and **Coldwell**, the city manager, have been lobbying park officials to reopen the highway.

Park spokesperson Joelle Baird said Superintendent Edward Keable is considering reopening the eastern entrance on May 21, before Memorial Day weekend. Baird said the final decision will be made only after careful consideration and consultations with tribal leaders. Other factors that

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

must be weighed include park staffing needed to reopen the entrance and the possibility of changes in the pandemic, Baird said. The stretch of State Route 64 through the Navajo Nation outside of the park is a popular spot for roadside vendors trying to capitalize on tourist traffic, but those services remain prohibited by the tribe's public health orders. Jared Touchin, a spokesman for tribal President Jonathan Nez, said those restrictions could be revisited soon if the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths on the reservation continue to drop.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
September 16, 2020

Substance Abuse Task Force appointed

By Bob Hembree

The Page City Council took further actions to help ensure success for the Substance Abuse Task Force. Previously, the board was limited to five members. Following city staff recommendation, council amended the code, increasing the task force to seven members.

Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell**, referring to the Aug. 6 meeting between the City, Chamber, health professionals and the Navajo Nation, said, “We actually had more than expected participation.” **Coldwell** informed the council that Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez requested representation on the task force. **Coldwell** said “[There’re] a lot of resources out there that might be left on the table if we didn’t give them an opportunity to participate. It’s such a rarity that we get a chance where people want to step up and help. Why say no. They were all great candidates.”

Councilor Rick Yanke voiced concerns about the increased size, citing poor attendance at city board meetings, often not meeting the number required for a quorum. City Attorney Josh Smith, who was also instrumental in bringing the task force back to life, said, “I think [with] this board now, they definitely have a purpose and a lot of buy-in, so hopefully we can keep that going.”

Councilor Dennis Warner was active in the early stages of solving the city’s problem. He supported the change and said, “In the meetings that I’ve attended, I think that this has the potential to be an extremely powerful resource to approach this problem. These representatives, for the most part, are associated with organizations that are in that world that deal with this and can help us deal with the problem “These are people that represent organizations that have impact and decision-making authority to move this thing forward.”

Councilor David Auge, who attended the Aug. 6 meeting, said, “They’re also several who are in the trenches day in and day out so have a lot of buy-in.” After amending the code to allow seven members, council approved seven applicants, and encouraged others to stay involved. The new task force is well-rounded.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
September 5, 2020

Help for the Homeless, Stranded and Addicted
'The problem the City of Page faces is a daunting one'
Bob Hembree

Page summers and winters are brutal for the homeless and stranded, sometimes deadly. Couple extreme weather with alcohol, the danger increases. Page Chief of Police, Drew Sanders said there were four deaths this summer exhibiting signs of alcohol poisoning, overexposure to heat or both, including a 50-year-old man found in the Page City Park July 20, and a 43-year-old man found in the desert July 26 near U.S. Route 89.

Sanders said helping people get medical treatment or to the emergency room, is always an ongoing concern. Arrests for substance abuse related crimes are routine in downtown Page. Page has tried for decades to solve the downtown problem, and now, vigorous efforts have ramped up again. A task force has formed, and it's got the backing of people and organizations with experience and resources to get it moving. Before the pandemic, meetings were underway with representatives from local medical and mental health professionals, the police department, city officials, and council members. While the regular group meetings were on hold temporarily, it didn't stop discussions and making essential contacts through networking.

Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell** told the Chronicle, “problem the City of Page faces is a daunting one, and one that has been facing the residents and the affected for as long as most can remember.” **Coldwell** said the decision to help was the concern for safety. He said, “It was our fear that with the continued heat we could potentially see an uptick in hospitalizations and even deaths. Those have both come to fruition this summer.”

Coldwell said about 40 percent of all emergency service calls involve intoxicated individuals, “We have seen three deaths in three weeks from alcohol poisoning and exposure.” The Page Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services reported 338 calls for intoxicated individuals over the last six months. Page Hospital said 231 ethanol and alcohol patients were admitted to the emergency room in the last three months. Police, fire, courts and medical services see the same people week after week, month after month. Over 80 percent of court prosecuted cases involve alcohol. Encompass estimates they serve between 1,000 and 2,000 patients annually.

Sander's presentation on the subject said arrests only add debt to poverty. “It's not solution-based. No solution plan will be complete without robust treatment plans.”

So, what is being done?

Coldwell said, “It was the decision of city staff to attempt to make a difference in the problem, be it successful or not we were going to at least try. With myself, (Page City Attorney) Josh Smith, (Police) Chief Sanders, Chief (Jeff) Reed, (Community Development Director) Tim Suan, (Economic Development Coordinator) Gregg Martinez, and direction from Mayor (Levi) Tappan

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

we decided to re-establish the Substance Abuse Committee. With this core group we then decided to extend invitations to Banner Health, Coconino County, Canyon Lands, Encompass, Page Unified School District, Catholic Charities, and the Navajo Nation.”

A significant step forward grew from a group teleconference. Gregg Martinez spoke with Sandra Flores, Sr. Programs Director for Catholic Charities. From there, concrete plans began. Catholic Charities was granted funds through the CARES Act. This put them in a better position to extend a helping hand to Page. **Coldwell** and Sanders welcomed them with open arms. The city is providing Catholic Charities office space and utilities. This will give their two employees assigned to Page a place to work from near the city park. Sanders told the Chronicle, "It's not a silver bullet. We've got to have treatment options. We can't arrest our way out of the problem."

Coldwell said, “Catholic Charities will play a very important part in the outreach to those that are most affected. They will be seen daily working directly with the individuals affected. They will offer food, water, a ride home or even short-term hotel rooms to get them out of the extreme weather our area faces daily. They will be working directly with Encompass to get them the necessary help and hopefully long-term care.” Short-term care is available, but **Coldwell** said long-term care is something Page has never had. He’s working to make this happen with the help of Encompass and Catholic Charities and he’s pursuing permanent funding through the Governor’s Office. **Coldwell** said, “Currently we have had verbal commitments from all of those to help, we now are in the process of providing the documentation needed to be eligible for the funding.”

What makes this latest attempt to solve the problem different?

Page City Council committed \$25,000 to get it started. The driving force is **Coldwell** and team. They’ve managed to gather influential leaders together to discuss and join forces. An historic meeting took place at city hall Aug. 6. It was a mix of face to face in the council chambers and video conferencing. **Coldwell** led the meeting that included Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Arizona Rep. Arlando Teller, Coconino County District 5 Supervisor Lena Fowler, Encompass CEO Joe Wright, and representatives from Banner Health, CareFirst, Catholic Charities, Page Lake Powell Chamber of Commerce, Health Choice Arizona, and Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral and Mental Health Services. Page is also introducing a drug court to Page. **Coldwell** said, “The court will include a combination of probation, mental health, substance abuse counseling, and social services to make a long-term commitment to the addicted individual. The goal of the court is continuous treatment for individuals who need it. We are hoping this will end the never-ending revolving door that the court currently sees. This is a model that has been used very successfully in other communities such as ours.”

Coldwell said, “I do want to mention Rep. Teller and the commitment he has made to the success of this endeavor. It is because of him that the Navajo Nation, led by President Nez, has decided to come to the table. I can’t stress the importance of the working relationship that is needed in order for this to succeed. For President Nez and his staff to attend the initial informational meeting was of the utmost importance to begin to solve this problem.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Teller said, “Our people, our constituents, our families. our friends, some people we know personally are in our streets and may feel like there is no other way to get out of the situation that they’re in.” Teller continued, “With this group of folks, professionals, we can do something today, if not continually, in addressing not only this homelessness issue and the substance abuse issue and the resources that we are all limited by, we can work together in addressing this as a team, as a coalition.” Teller offered to work with stakeholders to address drafting appropriation funding for legislation. This includes collecting data and evaluating past efforts to learn where improvements can be made.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Lake Powell Chronicle
July 11, 2020

Mayor Tappan: New Industry, Mask Mandate, and the Facebook Post
Bob Hembree

Author’s note: This story was written Monday, July 5. On Tuesday, July 6, Mayor Tappan rescinded the Page City’s Council’s face-covering mandate, replacing it with an emergency proclamation. A 2/3 majority is sufficient to pass the mandate, however, it would take 30 days before it would go into effect. State law requires a ¾ supermajority for an emergency order to go into effect immediately. The council vote was 5-2 in favor. The mayor’s emergency order enabled the city to mandate face-coverings in indoor public spaces and businesses immediately. The penalty for noncompliance is not to exceed \$50.

Mayor Levi Tappan spoke with the Chronicle Monday. The interview touched on three topics: new industry, the mask mandate, and his Facebook post that led to national media attention. All three topics focus on the search for solutions to problems.

New Industry

When this reporter interviewed **Darren Coldwell** shortly after he was chosen as Page City Manager, the conversation focused on creating new industry in Page. **Coldwell** cited examples from his time as a Mayor and a County Administrator in Montana. His idea was to diversify Page’s income streams, to strengthen the economic base with micro industries. He said businesses could develop from within rather than from outside the community. These could range between 30 and 40 employees in size.

The current pandemic highlights the pitfalls of reliance on a single industry. It also suggests the business of tourism could change dramatically for years to come. While some will adapt, finding creative ways to reinvent their businesses and stay solvent, others won’t. In order for a city to continue to provide public services, there must be a supporting tax base. This points to developing new industries in Page with markets beyond its borders, ideally recession and pandemic proof. Mayor Tappan said the city is, “looking at ways to help small mom and pop businesses get started in Page, like small manufacturing, kind of like Yamamoto. We’re focusing on our industrial park to get small manufacturing and things like that.” In another example, Tappan said, “The airport has a lot of office space upstairs, but it’s not ADA compliant until we get an elevator. We’re working on getting some kind of elevator so we can unlock all the office space and use the airport as kind of an incubator space.” 'Incubator space' is a term used to describe facilities for startup companies trying new ideas. This could include software development, online services, or completely new innovations. Tappan, looking at the potential of the airport, adds, “We want to get more people flying into it, obviously, and also cater to private planes as a stopover. They can stop in and get lunch in Page, then go about their flights.” “We’ve been throwing around a lot of ideas,” said Tappan.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Mask Mandate The mask mandate was brought up by counselor Warren at the June 24 City Council Meeting. Governor Ducey had authorized local governments to enact their own pandemic safety measures on June 17. At that time, only two of the seven council members voiced support for the mandate, Warner and counselor Auge. The following week, after seeing huge spikes in the state, an emergency meeting was called. The possibility of a mask mandate was still alive. This time, only two voted against it, counselor Lee and counselor Davis. Vice Mayor Kocjan and counselor Yank both changed their views and supported the mandate. Tappan, who seemed on the fence at the June 24 meeting, cast the deciding vote needed to pass the order. The Chronicle asked Tappan, “What changed?” He said, “I started getting a lot more feedback, emails. About 75 percent wanted masks and 25 percent were against it.” “Kocjan said something that really struck me: if this can save once life, it’s worth a little inconvenience.”

Kocjan, in the emergency meeting, said a statement from the Whitehouse helped change his mind about the mask mandate. He said, “This thing’s been debated all over the world. The white house has changed, and like they said yesterday at the white house, that if it saves one person’s life it’s worth doing the right thing for your fellow man.” Tappan said, “I heard arguments on both sides, and the majority of the public wanted masks. So, we did it the way that would be the least intrusive.” In regard to renewing the mandate Aug. 1, Tappan said, “We’re following the numbers. We’ll do what the data says.”

The Chronicle asked if he received pressure from fellow employees at Banner Hospital. He said most are pretty good about not pressuring him one way or the other, though a few have cornered him. Tappan said, “Even in the hospital, health care employees are opposed. Most want masks, some of them don’t. There’s not a consensus within the hospital.”

The Facebook comment about Navajo Nation President Nez

Page residents are familiar with the groups of seemingly homeless people who congregate in the parks and the breezeway on block 17, the center of town. Police and emergency medical staff are called frequently, either because of intoxication, fighting or someone passed out on the sidewalk. They’re arrested or taken to the emergency room, then released. The arrest cycle repeats, most often with the same offenders. It’s been a concern for the city and local businesses for many years. Hospitals, public safety officials, and city representatives have met and discussed solutions. They were having regular meetings and developing plans of action. Then came COVID-19. It is in this context that Mayor Tappan made a one-sentence comment on Facebook, one which received national media attention in early May: "I wish he would battle alcoholism as hard as COVID19." The comment included a photo of a small group of people gathered in the breezeway of block 17. This, along with the intoxication, ambulances, and police responses, is a familiar scene for businesses in the area, including the Chronicle with its main entrance located on the same breezeway.

The Chronicle asked Mayor Tappan to provide his own context for his comment, which some interpreted as having racist underpinnings. He said, “My first state of the city address, I said we need to work on substance abuse in town, and we need to do it without pointing fingers and calling names at each other -- because I knew that would happen and that is exactly what

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

happened.” Tappan said, “People that live in Page know that there’s a problem we need to work on. I tried to explain the context on that post, but no one wants to listen to facts anymore,” adding, “Alcohol kills one in ten people on the reservations. It’s much higher than COVID. And the only way we’re going to solve this is working together because President Nez closing down the reservation is causing more problems for border towns.”

When asked if he’d had any interactions with President Nez recently, Tappan said, “Two weeks before that comment I had emailed him and mailed him letters trying to work with him and we’ve never heard from him. We’ve never gotten a response from him.” Tappan said, “I talked with several of the tour companies, and they say they can’t get a response from him either. So, I’m guessing Facebook is the way to get ahold of President Nez.” The comment did get the attention of President Nez. He wrote a widely published response to the mayor’s comment. It essentially asked for the same cooperation Tappan said he’d been asking for in solving the substance abuse problem. Tappan, looking at the positive side of the incident, said, “So, I started the conversation. Eyes are opened. Kaibito Mental Health has contacted us. They have resources and want to help us out, partner with us. There’ll be a lot of good that comes from this.”

Liquor sales, mental health, and drug court

The mayor outlined the city’s approach to solving the problem. “We want to cover it from three angles. One is the supply side. We want to cut off the supply side. So, if they know that can’t get it, they’ll stop coming. We’ve had great success. Styx Liquor is reporting great success on that. We want to help educate the clerks. It’s actually illegal to serve inebriated people. “We also want to work on the mental health side. Catholic Charities is coming in, and Lake Powell Medical Center. “The third side, I think we’re going to get it this year, is setting up a drug court. So, we’re putting more in the budget for the court side so it’s not just a revolving door. We’re actually helping them find the help they need.”

Tappan says this will happen in the municipal court with the help of the county for services. In addition to city and county involvement, he said, “Catholic Charities is doing fieldwork, hanging out in our parks to find out what people need.” The city of Page is providing office space and utilities for Catholic Charities to work from. Tappan, referring to his 2018 campaign promise, ended the interview with, “And we’re still working on a pool.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Associated Press State Wire: Arizona (AZ)
April 18, 2020

Arizona cities retrenching to cope with coronavirus outbreak

Author: The Associated Press

Arizona cities are tightening their belts and revising previously rosy budget forecasts as the coronavirus outbreak's financial impact takes hold in metropolitan areas and mostly rural counties alike. Steps already being implemented or under consideration include freezing hiring, putting projects on hold and foregoing planned equipment purchases. Cities laying off or furloughing workers include at last two Phoenix suburbs and Page in northern Arizona.

State budget analysts project significant drops in tax revenue, including sales tax collections that are a major source of funding for cities. Meanwhile, fuel taxes that help pay for transportation projects also will be reduced as Arizonans drive fewer miles. "We don't know how much yet, but we are going to see a reduction of state-shared revenues," Colleen Haines, Kingman public affairs coordinator, told the Kingman Miner. "We are going to see a reduction in our budget. Those are the facts." Kingman is delaying the planned purchase of a new \$1 million fire truck and putting off building remodeling projects. Phoenix now faces a projected \$26 million shortfall instead of a \$28 million surplus. "And that's after accounting for spending reductions and a hiring freeze instituted on March 19," City Manager Ed Zuercher said.

Additional options being considered include selling surplus land, not replacing aging vehicles and trimming payments to the pension fund for city workers, azfamily.com reported. "I believe we have even more difficult decisions in front of us," Mayor Kate Gallego said during Monday's City Council meeting. Zuercher has asked each department to list cuts adding up to 25% in case they're needed, Gallego noted. "We are trying to tighten our belts along with everyone."

Prescott officials also are redrawing their revenue forecasts and spending plans, The Daily Courier reported. "We are definitely in the middle of a recession now, with these jobless rates," said city Budget and Finance Director Mark Woodfill. Prescott has already frozen many expenditures and vacancies while halting employee travel for both cost and health reasons. Woodfill plans to present the City Council with a revised budget proposal with "a lot of contingencies," and he suggested leaving open the possibility of a property tax increase. Publishing a notice of intent wouldn't require the council to take the step, he said, but it would leave the option open until June when a final decision would have to be made and more is known about the economy.

The economy has already cost hundreds of municipal workers their jobs, at least temporarily, as Mesa and Tempe close facilities and shut down programs, the Arizona Republic reported. Tempe on Monday furloughed 495 temporary employees, most of whom work for departments that operate the library, arts and culture facilities, community centers, recreation programs and volunteer services. "This was a heartbreaking decision because our part-time, temporary employees are the face of Tempe for many people in our community," City Manager Andrew

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Ching said. Tempe anticipates having to make other budget cuts as restaurants scale back operations and other businesses close temporarily, reducing sales tax revenue. Mesa is laying off 23 full-time workers and 455 part-time employees and not filling 35 vacant positions as it shuttered libraries, parks and recreation facilities and arts center.

City Manager Chris Brady recommended that Mesa keep the facilities closed until October for both cost and health reasons, but some City Council members said they'd like to open the doors again earlier if possible. "The impact will kill the downtown area to go much beyond the summer," Councilwoman Jen Duff said of the closures,, the Republic reported.

Page laid off 25 of the city's 175 employees as officials said they expect revenues to drop 33% due to lost sales tax, the Arizona Daily Sun reported. The layoffs were focused on several parts of city government, including the public works department, summer recreation programs, the library and the parking operation at Horseshoe Bend, a sightseeing area along the Colorado River. Page's revenue depends heavily on people visiting Horseshoe Bend, Lake Powell or national parks in the region, but City Manager **Darren Coldwell** said few such visitors are expected during the pandemic. At most, **Coldwell** said, Page may still see people visiting from within about a 500-mile (805-kilometer) radius, such as families who might be looking to get away for just a few days.

Tucson has frozen hiring for most departments, but City Manager Michael Ortega said furloughs and layoffs would be "the last option," the Arizona Daily Star reported. "We're going to do everything we can to keep us from having those discussions," Ortega told the City Council. Preliminary projections show Tucson's revenue decrease could last through August and plateau through the end of the calendar year before incremental increases restart in 2021, Ortega said. "But keep in mind we would still be below where we started," Ortega said of the city's overall budget.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Arizona Daily Sun, The (Flagstaff, AZ)
April 17, 2020

City of Page lays off employees as sales tax revenues fall

Author: Adrian Skabelund

As projected revenues plummeted, the city of Page laid off about 14% of its municipal staff this week. Page City Manager **Darren Coldwell** said as city officials have been speaking to local business leaders, they now expect revenues to drop about 33% due to lost sales tax. That essentially puts the city back at the level of funding it had in 2015, **Coldwell** added, prior to the growth the city has recently experienced. The layoffs, which equal 25 of the city's 175 employees, essentially eliminated everyone working in the public works department, at Horseshoe Bend, in summer recreation programs and at the Page Public Library. The directors of the four divisions were not let go, but all are now working at the library, **Coldwell** said. That should mean, despite laying off staff, the library will remain in operation. Horseshoe Bend also remains open, although it will no longer be staffed with parking attendants and other workers. **Coldwell** said the city decided to make cuts in those four areas after looking at the budget and determining which departments had been most affected by the crisis.

Making the decision to let employees go was not an easy one **Coldwell** said, although at this time he is hoping they will be able to rehire many of the staff members that were laid off. Every year, **Coldwell** said about 4.5 million tourists pass through the city either to visit Horseshoe Bend or Lake Powell, or simply on their way to one of the surrounding national parks. And many of those tourists are coming from places such as Europe, Asia or the east coast of the United States. But given the fear around the coronavirus and the travel restrictions in place, **Coldwell** said they likely won't see nearly any of those tourists. As a result, the city would see a significant drop in the city's sales tax revenue. **Coldwell** said at most, they may still see people visiting from within about a 500-mile radius such as families who might be looking to get away for just a few days.

Leaders at the city of Flagstaff, which was already looking at a tight budget prior to the crisis, may be faced with similar challenges as the city sees revenues fall. The city council and staff are set to discuss the upcoming city budget later on in April. Robert Maxim, a research associate at the Brookings Institution, said local governments across the state and the nation are likely to experience similar funding gaps because of the economic shutdown caused by the coronavirus. "A lot of cities, and especially those that rely on sales tax, are going to have huge budget holes blown in them, and so it's going to be difficult for municipalities to respond [to the crisis] on their own," Maxim said. "That's where, in my opinion, the federal government needs to be doing more for states and localities." So far, Maxim said the majority of the money the federal government has approved to send local governments is dedicated specifically for coronavirus response. But in Maxim's opinion, more money needs to be sent to help mitigate the effects of all the lost tax revenue caused by the economic shutdown.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Darren Coldwell** is listed below.]

The Montanian
January 22, 2019

Fun and games at Libby 2019 Chamber’s fundraiser
By Tracy McNew

Friday, Jan. 11 marked the Libby Chamber of Commerce’s annual award and fundraising banquet. The event was themed “game night,” and a crowd packed the Memorial Center to enjoy not only awards and games, but also a game themed dinner catered by Mandy Bell’s Gracious Table, complete with domino shaped brownies for dessert. Chamber president, Scott Beagle started the evening with a recap of the Chamber’s many activities over the past year, and then introduced the board of directors which includes Kim Peck, Jamie Paulsen, Liz Whalen, Bruce Vincent, LeRoy Thom, Amber Holm, and Alissa Ramirez. The event was emceed by Liz Whalen, and awards were presented by various people during dinner. This year’s winners included:

Lincoln County’s person of the year- **Darren Coldwell**

Most winners gave a short acceptance speech, and the final award for Lincoln County’s person of the year was presented to **Darren Coldwell**’s mother and sister since he was out of town for healthcare reasons during the event. **Coldwell** connected by video conference though, along with his wife Barbie, and despite technical difficulties with sound, a banter ensued between **Coldwell** and award presenter, Mark Peck, that was touching enough to garner a large round of applause and even a standing ovation by some attendees.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Flat Head Beacon
July 11, 2018

Copper, Silver, and Frustration

By Justin Franz

In a warehouse on the edge of Libby, Theodore Montgomery can supply you with just about anything you would ever need to mine copper and silver. Need a hard-rock drill bit? Sure thing. What size do you want? How about hard hats? How many do you need? What about boots, miner's gloves and safety vests? Yes, yes and yes. "We've got everything from toilet paper to jumbo drills," said Montgomery, who runs F&H Mine Supply's Libby warehouse. "If a mine needs it, we can deliver it."

A few years ago, when the Troy Mine was still producing millions of pounds of copper and silver annually, it wasn't uncommon for Montgomery to make two or three deliveries a day out to the mine. But that all came to an end in 2015, when the mine was shuttered due to a drop in demand for copper. Despite the loss of its biggest local customer, there was reason for F&H Mine Supply to keep a warehouse in Lincoln County. Two months after the shutdown, Coeur d'Alene-based Hecla Mining Company announced it was purchasing Revett Mining Company, including the shuttered Troy Mine and the proposed Rock Creek Mine near Noxon. The following year, Hecla expanded its Montana operations again with the acquisition of Mines Management, which had proposed the Montanore Mine project just south of Libby.

Hecla — which has more than a century of experience in operating mines in Alaska, Idaho and Quebec and considerably deeper pockets than the previous owners — promised to fully develop both mines in Lincoln and Sanders counties, two areas stricken with some of the highest unemployment rates in the state. "There was a lot of optimism locally that Hecla was a company with the resources and skills to push both of these proposed mines to the finish line," said Libby City Administrator Jim Hammons. But two years later, that optimism is starting to fade after the state of Montana designated Hecla President and CEO Phillips S. Baker a "bad actor," a move that some locals worry could kill both proposed mines. "I have no problem with strong mining regulations," said Libby native and Lincoln County Commissioner Mark Peck, "but this 'bad actor' designation against Baker goes too far."

After the Troy Mine closed, Montgomery and his colleague Jason Lucas started to reduce their inventory by moving supplies to other F&H warehouses across the region. They also updated their website in an effort to increase online sales. Montgomery and Lucas figured online sales would help the Libby warehouse stay afloat until the Montanore and Rock Creek mines finally opened. The search for copper and silver underneath the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness began in the early 1980s, when U.S. Borax acquired old mine claims there. A few years later, Canadian-based Noranda Minerals Corp. purchased the Montanore Mine claims and started constructing a 14,000-foot exploratory mine shaft — also known as an adit — 16 miles south of Libby, just outside of the wilderness boundaries. At about the same time, Asarco — which had opened the Troy Mine in 1981 — began work on the proposed Rock Creek Mine project near Noxon in

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sanders County (about 40 miles south of Troy). Both projects were put on hold in the early 1990s after a drop in demand for copper, which also shut down the Troy Mine from 1993 to 2005. But that pause turned out to be short-lived. In 1999, the Sterling Mining Company, which later became Revett, purchased the Troy Mine and the Rock Creek project and restarted the permitting process. In 2005, Spokane-based Mines Management acquired the Montanore project and started the same permitting process south of Libby. Taken together, both Montanore and Rock Creek have the potential to produce more than 500 million ounces of silver and 4 billion pounds of copper in their lifetime. The two deposits are separated by about 7,000 feet of earth and a fault line, suggesting that at one time it was actually one ore body. Many consider the combined deposit beneath the Cabinet Mountains to be one of the largest untapped copper and silver resources on Earth. If opened, each mine would likely employ hundreds of people, a potential boon to the local economy. In May, Lincoln County’s unemployment rate was at 6.6 percent, far above the state average.

For generations, Lincoln County’s economy was propped up by logging and mining, but the 1990s and 2000s brought hard times. In 1990, the W.R. Grace & Co. vermiculite mine closed north of Libby. In 1993, Asarco Mining closed the Troy Mine. That same year, Champion International sold its Libby operations to Stimson Lumber Company, which closed all but one of the mills. The downsizing left more than 800 workers unemployed. The one remaining lumber mill limped on for another decade, before closing in 2003. At about the same time, it was discovered that asbestos contained in the vermiculite mined by W.R. Grace had sickened thousands of people in the community. Libby and the surrounding area was designated a Superfund site by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, kicking off one of the largest environmental cleanups in American history, but also creating a stigma that has stuck with the town ever since.

Darren Coldwell has owned a sporting good store, been mayor of Troy and is currently the Lincoln County administrator. He’s had a front row seat to the community’s decline over the past few decades. He said that the 1993 closing of the Troy Mine took the “life” out of the little town just a few miles east of the Idaho border, and in some ways it’s never fully recovered. “There are just no working-class jobs here anymore,” **Coldwell** said. “If you’re an 18-year-old who does not want to go to college or join the military, there is really nothing to do for work here.”

With the arrival of Hecla in 2015, some locals believed that Lincoln County’s luck was finally starting to turn. Since then, the company has continued to work to get approval from a number of state and federal agencies to begin extensive exploration work to get a firm idea of just how much copper and silver is beneath the Cabinet Mountains and set the stage for the eventual opening of both mines. Most recently, in November 2017, the U.S. Forest Service announced it would likely give Hecla approval to begin exploration at Rock Creek sometime this year in a final record of decision on the project. But Rock Creek and Montanore are not without their opponents. A number of environmental groups — including Clark Fork Coalition, Earthworks, Montana Environmental Information Center, Rock Creek Alliance and Save Our Cabinets — have all come out against the project over concerns that the mines would drain and pollute mountain streams and harm the local grizzly bear population.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The environmental groups were also among the first to raise concerns about Hecla President and CEO Phillips S. Baker, who prior to working for the Idaho company was a vice president at Pegasus Gold. Pegasus went bankrupt in 1998, leaving the state of Montana with a \$32 million cleanup bill at a gold mine in the Little Rocky Mountains of north-central Montana. The state also spends about \$2 million annually for water-treatment systems at the site. In March, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality announced that Baker had been designated a “bad actor” and would not be able to engage in mining until he reimbursed the state for the gold mine cleanup. Environmental groups praised the decision. “Montanans have spent decades and millions of dollars cleaning up rivers and streams contaminated by irresponsible mining, and the work is far from over,” said Karen Knudsen, executive director of the Clark Fork Coalition. “The ‘bad actor’ law simply requires full responsibility from mining executives for their previous messes. In the case of Pegasus, it’s long past time these polluters are held accountable.” The bad actor law, passed in 1989, is meant to hold those who fail to clean up polluted mine sites responsible. Since then, it has only been used once, according to Kristi Ponozzo, public policy director of DEQ. Ponozzo is quick to note that only Baker has been designated a bad actor and that no action has been taken against Hecla. However, as long as Baker is at the helm of the company, it cannot pursue mining projects in the state.

Luke Russell, vice president of external affairs for Hecla, said the state’s interpretation of the bad actor law is “wrong” and that Baker is innocent of any wrongdoing. Baker has said in previous interviews that he was not a principal at Pegasus and that “decisions affecting the reclamation, including the bankruptcy settlement and the decision to cease mining operations at Zortman (gold mine)” were made after his departure from the company in early 1998. Hecla has sued the state in an effort to remove the bad actor label from its CEO. The ongoing lawsuit between Hecla and Montana adds a layer of “uncertainty” for the future of the Montanore and Rock Creek projects, Russell said, although he is optimistic that the company will eventually prevail. But locals in Lincoln County are less optimistic, viewing the recent turn of events as yet another example of the area’s long history of bad luck. Montgomery said he was not surprised that state officials in Helena decided to designate Baker a bad actor, in part, because as he see’s it, the state has never supported Montanore or Rock Creek. “I have no idea why the state is against these mining projects,” he said. “It seems to me they would have so much to gain if the mines opened. There would be more jobs and more taxes.” Montgomery said he’s worried that eventually F&H Mine Supply will decide it’s not worth waiting for the mines to open and close the Libby warehouse.

Just down U.S. Highway 2, LeRoy Thom, owner of Montana Machine and Fabrication, is also frustrated with the bad-actor designation. Before the Troy Mine shutdown, repairing pieces of mine equipment made up a sizeable chunk of Thom’s business. “It’s like every time they get over one set of hurdles with these mines, they face another set of hurdles,” he said. “It’s never ending.” Thom, who before opening his machine shop worked at the W.R. Grace vermiculite mine, said it’s particularly frustrating because the world needs copper and silver for everything from smartphones to buildings. He said if it’s not mined in the United States, it will be mined in other countries. “Unless the state of Montana gets behind these projects, I don’t think they’ll ever open,” he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Coldwell, the county administrator, said in recent months local officials have gotten more vocal about supporting Hecla by writing letters to state officials and even traveling to Washington, D.C. to make their pitch directly to federal agencies about the importance of the projects. “I think everyone is starting to see that if we want to save our community, we need to band together and be vocal about it,” he said. “I think we’ve seen how low we can go, and now it’s time to start digging ourselves out of this pit.”

Coldwell said he understands the dangers of having an economy so dependent on one industry and that mining is an especially cyclical business. However, as he sees it, having two mines supporting hundreds of jobs in the community would help “rebuild” the local economy and hopefully attract other businesses. “Success breeds success,” he said.

Not only would opening the two mines help rebuild the area economy, locals say, but it would also help Lincoln County rebuild its reputation into one that’s not centered around the stigma of being home to one of the largest Superfund fund sites in the country. Peck, the county commissioner, said he supports strong mining regulations to protect workers and the environment. However, he believes Hecla can mine copper and silver responsibly. “If any community should be hyper-sensitive to what bad mining practices can do, it’s this community,” he said. “We’ve been living with the consequences (of W.R. Grace) for more than 20 years, but does that mean we should never mine in this community again?”

Thom has a sign that proclaims “I Support Hecla” outside of his machine shop just south of Libby. It’s one of many signs you’ll spot around Libby and Lincoln County supporting the development of the Rock Creek and Montanore mines. “The idea is to learn from the mistakes of the past and make sure it’s done right in the future,” Thom said. “Hecla has a good track record and I don’t think they’re going to cut corners ... I think they can do it the right way.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Denver Post, The (CO)
September 17, 2017

Crucial area posts remain vacant - Openings range from the EPA to criminal justice

Author: Jesse Paul and Mark K. Matthews

Eight months into the Trump administration, a slate of top federal jobs in Colorado and the West remains unfilled -- a hiring delay that touches everything from the environment to criminal justice and one which local leaders and activists said hampers their ability to work with the White House. Full-time administrators have yet to be installed in the Colorado regional offices of the Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Housing and Urban Development and Department of Health and Human Services, among others. The state also has an acting U.S. attorney and a vacant seat on the federal bench. A jurist nominated in June to replace U.S. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch on the 10th U.S. District Court of Appeals only recently was given the green light to appear before a U.S. Senate panel for vetting. The slow pace hasn't gone unnoticed by either Democrats or Republicans, though the two sides often disagree on its primary cause -- the White House or Congress.

Research by CNN and the Partnership for Public Service, a nonpartisan good-government group, indicates that Trump has fallen far behind predecessors Barack Obama and George W. Bush in nominating federal officials and getting them confirmed. "We certainly have noticed it, but our hope is that they are going to fill those slots quickly and we're beginning to see some motion there," said Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, who added that the biggest impact was on government-to-government communication. "When you have things that need (an) explanation or a decision ... sometimes you have to wait," said Hickenlooper, a Democrat. "If you don't have the people on the ground, it's often hard to get that information or those decisions as quickly as sometimes you'd like." Asked about their progress, White House officials couldn't put an exact figure on the number of open federal jobs in Colorado or what the government calls Region 8, which includes Colorado and several nearby states. One member of a committee tasked with vetting local candidates said the panel had forwarded dozens of names to the administration since January. "We've tried to weigh in on the key positions that either can have a significant impact on Region 8 or the key positions where we were able to identify somebody who we thought could really make a difference," said Robert Blaha, who chaired Trump's Colorado campaign and is part of that vetting panel. He blamed the hiring delay on several factors, from the slow pace of the Senate to the time needed to conduct in-depth background checks. "I'd be a liar if I said the entire process isn't a bottleneck," Blaha said. As for the administration's own responsibility, Blaha suggested it could do more. "I don't know everything that's going on inside the White House, but I will tell you that I think it's time to pick up the pace," he said. "Anything the White House can do to encourage legislation ... to accelerate it, that's a possibility. To look at temporary assignments, that's a possibility." Also something to consider, Blaha added: Trump may not want to fill every position, in an effort to reduce the size of government.

According to a census of federal workers published after the election, there are about 9,000 federal jobs in which Trump could install his own people, although more than half of those

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

positions don't often change when a new president takes office, putting the figure closer to 4,000. But the turnover does have an impact, even if the basic function of government continues. "Without permanent leadership in place, these regional offices lack clear direction, are unable to develop new partnerships and can be forced to delay things like processing permit applications, grant requests and more," U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter, D-Arvada, said in a statement. One notable vacancy is the Denver-based EPA spot for Region 8, which covers Colorado, Montana, the Dakotas, Utah, Wyoming and 27 Tribal Nations.

Former Regional Administrator Shaun McGrath, who oversaw the Gold King Mine spill response, left in January. Since then, Deb Thomas has been filling his job in the interim. Several names recently were floated for the job, including Patrick Davis, who served as Colorado state director during Trump's 2016 campaign, and Doug Benevento, recently a Douglas County School Board member. Joni Teter, who retired three years ago after 25 years at the EPA, said an office can do routine work without a full-time leader but can't move forward on bigger items. "But when we get to the point where there are decisions to be made, whether that is decisions about a phase at a particular Superfund site or a permit or an enforcement action, that doesn't happen without an appointed person," said Teter, who pioneered Save EPA in response to the Trump administration's policies. The oil and gas industry isn't happy either - though for a different reason.

"What we are seeing is that Region 8 is acting like the election never took place," Kathleen Sgamma, president of the Western Energy Alliance, said about the local EPA office. She didn't cite specifics in Colorado -- other than an issue dealing with air regulations -- but Sgamma said she sees the "need for adult supervision in Region 8." The Department of Housing and Urban Development declined to comment about its search for a new regional administrator. But advocates for the homeless said filling the job is essential. "That role serves as the liaison for us and Washington, D.C., and in these incredibly uncertain times, we need to have a local contact that can provide policy and program guidance," said Cathy Alderman of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. "It would be much more comforting to know that there was a leader on the ground that would be available to help us navigate and plan for any potential budget cuts."

Similar concerns surround the U.S. attorney's office in Colorado, which has been spearheaded by acting top federal prosecutor Bob Troyer for about 13 months. That time period isn't necessarily unusual, officials say, though it still can put the state at a disadvantage. "The work of the U.S. attorney's office is carried out by dedicated career staff whose efforts continue full-force, even in the absence of a presidentially appointed U.S. attorney," said John Walsh, who held the role until leaving in July 2016. "But a presidential appointee's voice carries added weight in Washington, D.C., to make sure the office and its people get the budget, staffing and mission support they need to protect the public here in Colorado," Walsh added. Also in the justice realm, Colorado lacks a U.S. marshal to lead the agency that handles law enforcement for federal courts.

Records show Judge Robert Blackburn has yet to be replaced since taking senior status on Colorado's U.S. District Court bench -- which has a crowded caseload -- and there is no nominee to replace him. Colorado Supreme Court Justice Allison Eid was tapped in June to replace

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Gorsuch. Her nomination hearing was just set for Sept. 20. Another agency lacking a full-time regional administrator for Colorado and the region is FEMA. But so far, coming off a mild wildfire season in the state, no major problems have been reported.

Darren Coldwell, county administrator in Lincoln County, Mont., praised the agency for its response to the fires burning tens of thousands of acres in the area he oversees. More than a dozen structures -- including homes -- have burned there, and FEMA has been quick to respond. "We did just get approved here in the last couple of days for FEMA assistance," he said Monday. "They have been very responsive. I don't know if not having that person in there made a difference."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Montanian
August 15, 2017

Commissioners declare state of emergency

In a move designed to make the county eligible for state funding assistance, the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners last week passed a declaration of emergency for Lincoln County.

Lincoln County Administrator **Darren Coldwell** said the move makes the county eligible to file for reimbursement for firefighting expenses in excess of two mills, should the county spend that much during the fire season. Two mills equates to roughly \$70,000, **Coldwell** said. “The approval of the declaration is in response to the expected costs that the County may incur, because of the Gibraltar Ridge fire in Eureka,” he said. “It basically is to protect the taxpayers of Lincoln County. There is no reason for people to read more into the declaration than a precaution that the County has to follow by law.”

The two mill threshold to qualify for state assistance only applies to the county’s responsibility in relation to the fire, **Coldwell** said. The state and federal shares of the cost are not included in the eligibility calculation.

Lincoln County, the City of Libby, the Kootenai National Forest, and the state lands in northwest Montana are currently under Stage II fire restrictions based upon current drought and fire danger conditions. **Coldwell** said residents should not panic, but should also exercise extreme caution in helping prevent additional fires.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Independent Record (Helena, MT)
July 4, 2017

Annual Troy Fourth of July brings families together

Author: PERRY BACKUS

John and Lori Lark-McBride had their patch of shade staked along the busy Old Fashioned Fourth of July parade route in Troy. Waving their own small flags, the Libby natives relived their childhoods, watching their grandchildren do whatever they could to encourage candy to come flying their way.

The couple now live in Oregon, but the trip to Troy to celebrate the nation's birthday has become a tradition that they rarely miss. "It's our old stomping grounds," said John McBride. "We come home to see family. We make it a point to get here for this celebration." And a celebration it is. People started marking their spots along the parade route several hours before the first trailer load of veterans came by, waving to the crowd and throwing handfuls of candy to hordes of anxious children waiting with plastic bags in one hand and a flag in the other. "It's so beautiful here," McBride said. "We're always glad to get home." Before the parade got underway, Jeremiah Folker and his daughter, Claire, took a seat on the step on his logging truck and waved to friends as they drove by. There was the time when the parade had a large contingent of logging and mining machinery. Those days are long gone. "This is still our way of the life," Folker said. "We want it to be represented in the parade. Nobody really does it anymore."

With almost every part of her body covered in red, white and blue, including a pair of Elton John-like glasses and a pair of flags pointing skyward like elves' ears, Folker's daughter was anxious for him to fire up the truck and get moving. "I love to throw candy," she said. "How much longer?" Just across the street, the Women of Troy drill team gathered with their old-style webbed beach chairs they chose as props this year.

Hildy Johnson was feeling a bit nervous when she woke up Tuesday morning, but everything was just fine once she was surrounded by the women who have marched up and down the dump road with her over the past couple of weeks while learning their routine. "The road is straight and nobody uses it after 6 p.m.," Johnson said. "It's the perfect place to practice." This is the third year the 18 or so women offered their show to an appreciative crowd lining the streets. Last year, they chose umbrellas as their prop and the year before that, it was cordless drills. "We were kind of like Rosie the Riveter that year," Johnson said. "The crowd response has always been amazing. It is a little bit nerve-wracking. We're just a bunch of housewives or retirees, for heaven's sake. This is probably pushing ourselves a little bit beyond our limits, but we certainly do have fun doing it."

Up in the very front of the very first trailer filled with veterans sat 101-year-old Homer Davis with a young neighbor boy named Davie Joe sitting on his knee. Davis couldn't quite remember just how many of these parades that he's ridden in, but he knows it's been a lot. He's been part of the Troy community since the 1970s when he and his brother moved to town to open a bar. The

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

town was different then and so was the parade. For one thing, folks who got to know Davis also had the opportunity to sample some of his famous moonshine. "I used to make some good moonshine back in the day," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "It was a lot better than what they have to drink today." Davis served in World War II and helped direct traffic at the famous Battle of the Bulge. He can still remember General Patton's booming voice when he wanted something to happen fast. "He was kind of an orangutan, but he was a good soldier, too," Davis said. While Troy has its own set of orangutans, Davis said it's also filled with a lot of good people. "There will always be orangutans no matter where you go," he said, as he pushed the flag hanging on the side of the trailer back behind his head. "It's a good town. I have a tremendous number of friends here, but now I can't remember all their names."

Most of the men that he knew who fought in WWII are gone now. "There's nobody left that I can sit and tell my stories to," he said. "I can lie all I want and no one even knows." Troy's mayor for now — he's giving up the job after finding a new job in nearby Libby — raced around on a four-wheeler to make sure everyone in the parade found their place.

"This is the one thing every year that Troy does really well," said **Darren Coldwell**. "We've been doing this pushing 100 years or more. It's a good hometown event that requires everyone to come together to make it happen." It ends with a \$10,000 fireworks display. "When you consider that there's only 900 people in town, that's \$11 a person," he said. "It's just a great day for Troy."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://lincolncountymt.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Clerks_Corner_May-17.pdf
May 2017

Clerks Corner

Clerk & Recorder: Robin Benson

Budget FY 17/18: Lincoln County has restructured the county budget and its process under a Finance Department which includes payroll and accounting personnel. With this change, we welcome County Administrator **Darren Coldwell** as the Finance Director. This is a positive adjustment and creates an improved budget process for county government and the taxpayers.

We are again starting the budget process early. FY 17/18 budget work sessions began in February and are ongoing every week throughout the budget process. I am in full support of establishing a Finance Department. With more eyes on the budget, there is more attention to detail; all services are being looked at and everything is on the table.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Western News
February 3, 2017

Coldwell hired as county administrator

By Bethany Rolfson

As of Tuesday afternoon, Troy Mayor **Darren Coldwell** is the new county administrator. **Coldwell** will assume the position on Feb. 20. The announcement also comes with the news that **Coldwell** has recently sold his store of 25 years, Booze N' Bait, which is in escrow. "When this became available, I felt really confident that I could help out," **Coldwell** said. "It's a whole new chapter for me." District 1 Commissioner Mark Peck has been serving as interim county administrator since Aug. 1, 2015 after Bill Bischoff resigned as the county's administrative assistant. The commissioners told **Coldwell** that he could finish out his term as mayor of Troy. The county administrator is in charge of getting bids on projects, budgets and putting commissioners' meeting agenda together. He also deals with internal, administrative issues, and deals with the public when an individual has something they want to put on the County Commissioners' agenda.

In terms of conflicts of interest, **Coldwell** doesn't believe there will be any, because the mayor position is volunteer. However, he said that if there's any conflict at all he will step away and let another city council member handle it. His budget experience, he said, comes with the volunteer time at the school board and the last three and a half years with the City of Troy. **Coldwell** was sworn in as mayor in January of 2014. **Coldwell** also holds a bachelor's from the University of Montana in Interpersonal Communications. "I'm just excited to have a new challenge and I'm hoping that I can help them out with a fresh set of eyes looking at it from a different perspective," **Coldwell** said.

During the course of the last two months the County Commissioners had held two different application cycles for the administrative position and the final wrapped up earlier this week. In total, the county received 38 applicants, and six different individuals were interviewed earlier this week. Commissioner Mike Cole noted that each of the individuals were very qualified, which made the decision that much more difficult. Out of the six, four were Lincoln County natives. Cole said that two stuck out of the individuals they interviewed, The hiring committee was comprised of Robin Benson, Nancy Trotter-Higgins, Victor White and the commissioners Cole, Peck and Jerry Bennett. "I think the committee did a great job of evaluating all of the candidates," Cole said.

Mark Peck said he was impressed with **Coldwell**'s track record in Troy, and the commissioners concurred that **Coldwell** stuck out the most as a candidate because of his leadership and budget experience. "I think I was clear all along, that if I had to choose between a financial guru or a good leader — give me a good leader," Peck said. "You can learn the financial piece, but you can't teach someone how to lead." County Clerk and Recorder Benson said, and Peck agreed, that with **Coldwell** they got both financial and leadership skills. "I think all you have to do is look at his track record in Troy and what he's done financially with the City of Troy" Peck said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Flat Head Beacon
September 16, 2015

Community of Troy Hits Century Mark

By Justin Franz

The history books that chronicle the life and times of Montana are littered with towns that didn't quite make it; communities that fizzled out before putting down solid roots. For many communities, their prospects were tied to the boom and bust cycles of the mineral industry. When prices were good, miners from across the country would rush to an area hoping to strike it rich. But when the mineral deposits were gone or the values dropped, prospectors would pack their wagons and hit the dusty trail. That is very much how the story of Troy could have ended. The first miners arrived in 1886 and set up a tent camp at the mouth of Lake Creek, just south of where the town is today. But unlike other mining camps that disappeared into the pages of history, Troy survived and this month it celebrated its 100th anniversary with a series of events on Sept. 12 and 13. After those first miners set up camp near where Lake Creek meets the Kootenai River, they found their mineral claims were bountiful and more prospectors beat the path to the area. That path to Troy was soon widened in 1891 when the Great Northern Railway built its rapidly growing transcontinental line through town. The construction of steel rails cemented the community's future and the following year the city's first lodging house, the Windsor Hotel, was built. In June 1892, the town of Troy was created within the boundaries of Missoula County, which at the time encompassed most of western Montana. A few months after the hotel went up, Libby postmaster J.P. Bowen built the first house there.

The town grew even faster beginning in September 1892, when the Great Northern built a rail yard in Troy, complete with a station, roundhouse, coal chute and living quarters. The combination of rowdy railroaders and mischievous miners made Troy a hot spot for those looking for a good time. A visitor once described the scene in detail, writing, "Such sights and sounds that met the eyes and horrified the ears of this young woman from the east, were spectacular to say the least. Fifteen saloons gaily lit filed to the doors with 'wild men and wild women' yelling, singing, dancing, and cursing, with glasses held high, such was Troy." Troy's rowdy ways would continue for another two decades until 1915, when it decided it should and become a real town. In July of that year it voted to incorporate and on Sept. 9 the city council met for the first time. U.S. Highway 2 was also constructed to Troy that year and by the end of 1915 more than 350 people called it home. By the 1920s, the timber industry began to grow and within a few years its population grew to over 1,000 residents. By 1923, Troy was the richest town in Lincoln County. Its population peaked a few years later at 1,300 residents. The Great Depression and a series of fires took a toll on the town in the 1930s, but through the years it has persevered and today about 950 people live there.

Mayor **Darren Coldwell** said considering all the other communities that have come and gone, it's amazing that Troy has made it more than a century. He attributed that success to its people. "The people make this place special," **Coldwell** said. "There have been many ups and downs over the years."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Flat Head Beacon
December 23, 2014

Libby, Troy Replace City Attorney with Law Firms
Lincoln County communities hire lawyers out of Helena and Whitefish for their legal services

By Justin Franz

Two towns in Lincoln County have turned to law firms for their legal services instead of employing a single city attorney on contract. In early December, Libby and Troy's city councils voted to hire law firms out of Helena and Whitefish after both towns' attorneys left their positions. Libby contracted with Doney Crowley P.C. in Helena where Allen Payne will cover civil issues and Marc Buyske will cover criminal prosecution. Troy is contracting with Hedman, Hileman & LaCosta in Whitefish where Clifton Hayden will work on civil cases and Caleb Simpson will serve as the city prosecutor. The vacancies occurred earlier this year when Troy city attorney Heather McDougall and Libby's James Reintsma announced they were both stepping down from their city council-appointed positions.

Mayor Doug Roll said Payne had approached him earlier this year about his Helena firm taking over for Reintsma. Payne is a Libby native and has been involved with numerous legal issues in the community before, including helping get a settlement from International Paper a few years ago and representing the Lincoln County Port Authority in its lawsuit against Stinger Welding. Payne's firm was hired by the city council in a three-to-two vote earlier this month. "We've known Allen for years and he has done a lot for this community," Roll said. Payne's firm, Doney Crowley P.C., will be paid about \$5,600 a month or about \$67,000 annually. That is significantly more than what the last attorney was paid, but Roll said the city will get more services and there is too much work in Libby for one attorney to handle. "It was a heck of a lot of work and you need more than one attorney," Roll said. "Even if we have to pay a little more, I'm tired of having the city underrepresented."

Troy will be paying considerably less for its new attorney, although the workloads between the two jobs are considerably different. Troy Mayor **Darren Coldwell** said the attorneys at Hedman, Hileman & LaCosta in Whitefish would be paid an hourly rate of \$100. He said the new agreement should save the city \$4,000 to \$5,000 annually; the previous attorney was paid about \$20,000 a year. When the contracted city attorney needs to appear at a city council meeting, they will be able to appear through videophone.

In the past it was common for communities to have a single city attorney, but David Nielsen, interim director of the Montana League of Cities and Towns, said more towns are now working with larger legal firms. He said the larger firms often have more resources and more attorneys that specialize in different aspects of the law. "It's a better deal for the cities and towns," Nielsen said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Flat Head Beacon
March 1, 2014

After Mathematical Error, Lincoln County’s Budget Under Scrutiny
By Beacon Staff

Almost a month after Lincoln County officials stood before a packed meeting room and told their constituents that a mathematical error resulted in county residents being overtaxed to the tune of \$2.1 million, the commission is looking at how it can trim costs and pay people back. Among the suggestions is a plan to close the Troy Area Dispatch and combine its services with the Lincoln County Sheriff’s dispatch in Libby.

But Troy Mayor **Darren Coldwell** said closing the dispatcher’s office would detrimental to the community. “I would hate to see Troy lose that service,” he said. “A lot of people think that Troy Area Dispatch just dispatches emergency services, but it’s a lot more than that.”

The error that has worsened Lincoln County’s already tight budget was found late last year, when someone noticed the county had allowed 56.86 mills to be levied for the Troy Area Dispatch, when it should have only been 31.91 mills. The mills are supposed to rise with inflation. Instead, upon further inspection, the county realized that taxes were inflating above and beyond that level. During the 2010–2011 fiscal year, dispatch received \$8,526.36 more than it should have; in 2011–2012 it received \$43,213 too much; in 2012–2013, \$111,278.10; and in 2013–2014, \$216,915.30; for a grand total of \$379,932.76 over four years. Additional mistakes were found in how the Troy Parks District and the Lincoln County Campus District received funding. In all, Lincoln County over-taxed its citizens by \$2,112,597.25, according to preliminary and unverified figures offered by the county.

L. Harold Blattie, executive director of the Montana Association of Counties, said the error happened sometime around 2009 when the county clerk and recorder was calculating tax data that determines how many mills can be levied in each district. Instead of entering the gross proceeds money received from the Troy Mine, the clerk entered the taxable value of that money and that mistake resulted in the mill levies exceeding their limits. On Feb. 7, the Lincoln County commissioners and Tammy Lauer, the clerk and recorder responsible for the mistake, met with citizens to inform them of what happened.

In the weeks since, officials have been combing over the books and have hired an independent auditor to look at the Troy Area Dispatch’s budget and audit all of the mill levy worksheets from the last three years. Once those reviews are completed, the county will figure out how to reimburse taxpayers. Commissioner Tony Berget said the county had hoped it would be able to simply issue a reimbursement check, but that turned out to be cost prohibitive. “It looks like we’re just going to have to reduce taxes for the next two or three years and we’re now debating how long that will take,” he said. “But we want to do it as quickly as possible.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Berget said the county is looking to make cuts anywhere it can, and one option is closing the Troy Area Dispatch, which is at the center of the mathematical mistake. Lincoln County Sheriff Roby Bowe has been hosting a series of public meetings about the matter and said consolidating the dispatch with the one in Libby would save money. “It would be just as effective as it is now,” Bowe said. According to Bowe, the Troy Area Dispatch’s budget is about \$250,000 annually. He argues his dispatchers could do the same job for \$10,000 every year, following an initial cost to update area radio towers that would cost \$300,000.

However, Mayor **Coldwell** and Troy Area Dispatch board member Gene Rogers said closing the local dispatching center doesn’t make sense, especially since it was recently refurbished. Besides dispatching police and fire services, the Troy Area Dispatch organizes school bus drivers, utility workers and even occasionally helps reunite people with a lost pet. If the dispatching center were to close in Troy, six people would also lose their jobs. “That’s six families impacted by this,” he said. “That’s not good for Troy.”

Berget said it would be up to the people to decide if the Troy Area Dispatch should close and it may be put on the ballot in June. “It was voted in by the people and so we think it’s right that they decide what happens,” he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Western News
February 25, 2014

Troy Council votes to pay Chief McLeod's legal expenses

By Phil Johnson

What a difference an election can make. A few months after the previous Troy City Council balked at the idea of accepting donated exercise equipment, citing concerns of insurance liability should someone fall six inches off a balance beam, and hesitated to cover the payment of Police Chief Bob McLeod's legal fees for an incident in which he used a stungun on a handcuffed man in the back of a police car seven years ago, the panel voted to approve both matters at Monday night's meeting.

The approved fitness trail will be a donation from Troy Park and Recreation. First entered onto the council's agenda near the end of former Mayor Tony Brown's tenure, the fitness trail will include more than a dozen unique stations providing instructions and equipment for stretching and exercise. Concern about potential liability issues, voiced by former Councilman Phil Fisher and supported by Brown, stalled the proposal last year. Before taking office, Mayor **Darren Coldwell** came out in support of the donation. During Monday's meeting, **Coldwell** led the movement to accept. "I talked to (Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority) and they have no problem with it," **Coldwell** said of the city's insurer. "I talked to the boys at the shop, and they have no problem with it, either."

After the donation was unanimously approved, **Coldwell** said he expects the installments to be placed beyond the fishing pond in Roosevelt Park. "I think it will be a great addition to the dead space back there," **Coldwell** said. Except for maintenance, which is expected to be minimal, **Coldwell** said installation will come at zero cost to the taxpayer.

Moving onto the heavier agenda item, payment of McLeod's legal fees, **Coldwell** prefaced public comments by saying he understands the diverse feelings on the topic. Former councilwoman Fran McCully, sitting in the audience, stated her continued disapproval of the payment. "If a person cannot admit their mistake, they are more likely to commit that mistake," McCully said. "If we pay this, we should pay it all now and not pass on a debt."

Brown, also in the audience, followed McCully's statement by questioning the city's fiduciary responsibility and Councilman Joe Arts' ability to separate friendship and civic responsibility. "I think Joe should recuse himself," Brown said. "I think he's defending Bob on a personal relationship and overlooking his elected duties to the citizens of Troy." Arts responded. "The fact that Bob is a friend of mine does not mean I do not respect my duty to the city, either," Arts said. "I am not going to vote yea or nay because he is a friend of mine."

Coldwell followed with a report on his research. **Coldwell** said he talked to a number of legal minds including Lincoln County Attorney Bernie Cassidy, Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority CEO Alan Hulse and past Troy City Attorney Charles Evans on the matter. All were in

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

agreement that the city is obligated to cover McLeod's fees. After some negotiation between **Coldwell**, McLeod and McLeod's attorney, Pat Flaherty, it was agreed the matter would be settled for \$22,713. Of that sum, \$12,713 will be paid to McLeod to cover out-of-pocket expenses he made during his successful defense in a Public Safety Officer Standards and Training Council, or POST, hearing. The hearing stemmed from a complaint filed against McLeod for using a Taser to subdue A.J. Haflich in November 2007 after a drunken-driving arrest. Payment of McLeod's fees passed unanimously. Payment will be made upon the signed agreement by McLeod and Flaherty that the matter is settled. The money will be paid in full during the current fiscal year.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Flat Head Beacon
January 10, 2014

New Mayor Sets Positive Tone in Troy

Author: Beacon Staff

Two years after a recall election split the community and its city government, the town of Troy has elected a new mayor who is trying to set a positive tone at City Hall. **Darren Coldwell** was sworn in on Jan. 2 as the town's third mayor in just as many years.

Coldwell replaced Mayor Tony Brown, who served for a year and a half after Donald Banning was ousted in a recall election in May 2012. **Coldwell** was elected in November with nearly 70 percent of the vote, taking 225 ballots compared to Brown's 98. The new mayor said he had thought about running in the past and finally decided to take the plunge in 2013. He has run Booze N' Bait, a liquor and sporting goods store in Troy since 1992. "I want to put a positive foot forward," he said. "I hope to set the tone that we are going to be a positive force."

Rumblings of political unrest begin in Troy during the winter of 2012, two years after Banning was first elected mayor. In January, city councilor Fran McCully began circulating a petition to recall Banning. Among the reasons she gave were that Banning had tried to fire then-City Attorney Charles Evans without consent from the city council; that in March 2011; the mayor had cashed a check to cover travel expenses that were never approved; that Banning had gone ahead with the construction of a picnic area at a local park and never consulted the council; and that Banning had gone forward with the codification of city ordinances but never told anyone. Banning maintained that he was only doing his job and that McCully was trying to grab more power for herself. Election officials accepted the petition and, after Banning tried to fight the effort in court, a recall election was held in May. Banning lost by 67 votes and on June 8 the council selected Brown to finish out Banning's term. But even with a new mayor, councilor Joe Arts said infighting persisted. He said he was hopeful about having new faces on the council. Along with **Coldwell**, Dallas Carr and Kimberly Rowse were elected to the board. "I think this will be a great improvement over what we had," Arts said. "We want to heal the city government after the past four years."

Coldwell said he is excited about getting Troy residents involved with their local government. He said he wants to tap into the town's rich community spirit that is most often displayed when neighbors need a helping hand. Most recently, that outpouring of support was shown to the victims of an apartment fire in December. Following the blaze, local residents donated everything from clothing to furniture to help the victims.

Coldwell has quickly made changes at City Hall. Soon after being sworn in, he created two committees; one to look into purchasing a new excavator and another to review the city's outdated drug policy. "I want to make improvements, I don't want to be a rubber stamper who just shows up once a month," he said. He said he hopes to go out and attract new business to the area, saying that while recent layoffs have been hard, it also means that there is a large workforce

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

ready to work. He touted Troy and Lincoln County’s quality of life and inexpensive cost of living.

Coldwell invites anyone to stop into City Hall if they have grievances or want to meet with him. He plans on being available on Monday morning and afternoons and Tuesday through Friday, from 3:30 to 5 p.m., “unless it’s sunny out and there’s a potential for golf,” he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Western News
November 8, 2013

Coldwell wins Troy mayor; Carr and Rowse claim seats
by Phil Johnson

Out with the old and in with the new was the theme in Troy's elections as challenger **Darren Coldwell** handily defeated incumbent Tony Brown and two challengers were elected to City Council.

Coldwell claimed the mayoral election 225-98. The owner of the popular Booze N' Bait store, **Coldwell** is the son of former long-time Troy Elementary School principal Bobby K. **Coldwell**. The mayor-elect praised his predecessor minutes after learning of his election. "I want to say what a great job Tony did getting Troy back together," **Coldwell** said. "I look forward to sitting down with him and working together."

In the City Council race, challengers Dallas Carr and Kimberly Rowse were elected with 205 and 148 votes, respectively. Incumbent Phillip Fisher earned 129 votes, and challenger Donna Lee Rugani earned 107. Current City Council member Fran McCully did not run for reelection.

The election of a new mayor and two new council members completes a transformation of leadership that began when council members Joe Arts and Crystal Denton began their terms in January 2012. In June 2012, Mayor Donald Banning was recalled following allegations of attempting to fire City Attorney Charles Evans, cashing a check for travel expenses and approving construction of a picnic area without consulting with or getting approval from City Council. Brown, Troy's mayor from 1974-1979, filled the vacant seat left by Banning.

"I am happy for **Darren** and am sure he will do a great job," Brown said. "I plan to enjoy some more free time outdoors. We will sit down and talk policy. There is a lot to learn."

Rowse is a retired registered nurse who now owns and operates Hotel Montana.

A retired logger and miner who now coaches high school football and fast-pitch softball, Carr won on a simple campaign based on a willingness to compromise and listen to city's wishes. "I'm ready to get people back to getting along," Carr said after learning from a reporter of his election. "If the people elected me, I said I'd be ready to serve. I just wasn't too caught up in it. I was just watching a concert on TV."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Western News
October 19, 2012

People Profile: Darren Coldwell

Author: Not Listed

Occupation: Owner of Booze 'n' Bait, Troy.

Tenure: Has owned Troy business for 21 years.

If you were not doing this job, what would you be doing? Traveling the world.

Family: Wife Barbie, children Donny, Billy and Allie.

Recognitions: President of Rotary, Director of Troy Chamber.

Hobbies: Golf, gardening, cooking, anything outdoors.

Darren was asked to complete these sentences beginning with “I am ...”:

— “I am ... happy to have a wonderful healthy family. ...”

— “I am ... lucky to be able to live in such a great place. ...”

— “I am ... thankful to be able to volunteer with such great people. ...”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Missoulian (Missoula, MT)
June 30, 2012

Troy plans special Fourth of July holiday

Author: the Missoulian

This town has always done Fourth of July up big, but this year will be something special. “The city has spent more time and money than ever to make Independence Day go off with a bang,” reports Ryan Murray of the Western News in Libby.

Darren Coldwell, one of nine volunteer organizers, said the fireworks show at Roosevelt Park on Wednesday night will be bigger. Almost \$7,000 worth of fireworks was supplemented by an additional 25 percent more as a bonus for buying so many.

But there’s much more – a quilt show the day before at W.F. Morrison School, more food vendors, a bigger car show and, once again, a couple of F-15s in a flyover at the parade. The day’s festivities, including a parade at 11 a.m., figure to draw 4,000-6,000 people, **Coldwell** said. A new rock band, Simon Sez from Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, will play from 7:30 p.m. until the fireworks show at 11 p.m. “It’s been a real community effort,” **Coldwell** said. “People should come out because it is just so much fun.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Darren Newell Coldwell
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Western News
April 14, 2010

Troy School Board to hire HS principal

By Canda Harbaugh

The Troy School Board voted Monday to vacate a proposal to cut one of its three administrator positions, choosing instead to move forward in hiring a replacement for resigning high school principal Jeff Ralston. In light of receiving information that Troy schools would not meet state accreditation standards with less than the equivalent of 2-1/2 administrators, the board chose to continue the format as-is. The original proposal involved elementary school principal Lance Pearson filling the high school principal position, and Superintendent Brady Selle delegating some of his work so that he could take on both the superintendent and elementary school principal roles. Approving additional office personnel hours or assigning a teacher a leadership role to pick up the slack would have cost considerably less than a principal's salary and benefits at \$83,000 per year. However, the superintendent cannot take on more responsibilities, the state said, because Troy schools exceed 30 full-time equivalent employees. "It was a moot point after we found out we have to have 2-1/2 administrators," Trustee **Darren Coldwell** said. "We're six teachers over."

The board discussed other ways to reorganize administration positions, since the equivalent of only 1-1/2 principals is required to lead the two schools. Trustees entertained the idea of appointing Pearson as principal of both schools, and assigning someone to assist him – a part-time vice principal or a lead teacher at both schools. "I guess I like the idea of Lance bouncing between both schools and having a dean of students at each school because we're going to save quite a bit of money by doing that," Trustee Steve Garrett said at Monday's meeting. "The bottom line is that it's easier to do this now than later." A lead teacher, or dean of students, would not meet the state's requirement of an administrator, however, unless the individual was certified and licensed to be a principal, Selle said.

Hiring a part-time principal in place of a full-time one wouldn't save nearly enough money to justify the switch, **Coldwell** said, especially if money must be spent elsewhere to make up for the cut. "When you throw in benefits, retirement – I mean, unless you get rid of one whole person, which was our original thought, then we could save \$50,000 or \$60,000," **Coldwell** said. "If you can only save \$10,000 or \$20,000, that's not worth it in a \$6 million budget. I think it's better to have a full-time principal." In a 5-1 vote, with Garrett opposing, the board chose to hire a new full-time high school principal. The hiring committee is in the process of paring 16 applicants down to four or five, Selle said Wednesday. He anticipates commencing interviews early next week.

Research Compiled by: Liliana Oberg
 Colin Baenziger & Associates

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES
EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Section 7

Patrick C. Comiskey

*Juno Beach Town Manager
Candidate Report*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
COVER LETTER AND RESUME	1
CANDIDATE INTRODUCTION	11
BACKGROUND CHECKS	19
DSK LINDSEY GREEN CONTRACT ISSUES	23
REFERENCE LETTERS	33
CB&A REFERENCE NOTES	39
INTERNET SEARCH	51

Cover Letter and Resume

Patrick C. Comiskey

**1501 Edgewater Avenue
Mount Dora, FL 32757**

**Cell: 443-477-0972
Email: pccomiskey@gmail.com**

October 18, 2024

Mr. Scott Krim, Senior Consultant
Colin Baenziger & Associates

RE: Juno Beach Town Manager Position

Dear Mr. Krim:

I am excited to submit this letter of interest for the town manager position having spent 30 years building my knowledge of city government operations. I feel my background encompasses the broad and diverse municipal experience for which you are looking. I have successfully managed cities in different parts of the country giving me a vast assortment of work experiences with different governments: state, county, and regional. I hold a solid record of positive, energetic leadership stressing quality customer service, support for the employees with whom I have worked, and productive partnerships with many intergovernmental and community agencies. I have also enjoyed good working relationships with the vast majority of the elected officials under whom I've served. I strive to be an effective listener and value input from others and have always had an open-door policy with officials, staff, and citizens of the community. I believe citizen accessibility to be vitally important and have always been very visible in the community.

A strong attribute of mine is planning, particularly with infrastructure, and my planning and oversight experience is substantial. I also enjoy finding solutions to budgeting challenges. I have successfully prepared and managed many general and enterprise fund budgets, have overseen millions in capital projects, and have acquired many grants. I also possess an in-depth understanding and experience with an array of electric, maintenance, water, wastewater, marina, and storm water management issues. Additionally, I have extensive experience with successful beautification and park projects. Furthermore, I have undertaken measurable improvements to responsible service delivery through successful negotiations resulting in sensible agreements with county government and other area agencies.

In Mount Dora, I was brought in as a change agent and unfortunately a new mayor and the bureaucracy pushed back; eventually, leading to my position becoming untenable. After my first year, I had a good review from the city officials and they gave me a \$17,000 raise. I have provided a list of many of the city's accomplishments and fiscal savings under my leadership.

My wife is a Florida native and I am a graduate of the university in Gainesville. We are excited about this opportunity and are looking to make a long-term commitment to Juno Beach where we plan to become actively involved. I look forward to discussing this position and special opportunity with you at your convenience.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Patrick Comiskey

Patrick C. Comiskey

1501 Edgewater Avenue
Mount Dora, FL 32757

443-477-0972
pccomiskey@gmail.com

Experience

City Manager, Mount Dora, FL

2021 - 2024

Population approx. 18,000; regular employees approx. 250, total approx. 325; annual budget about \$130 million

- Oversaw city operations
- Responsible for general, sewer, water, storm water, electric, sanitation, fire service, capital, CRA, and other funds
- Managed police, fire, public works, sanitation, sewer, water, electric, storm water, parks, recreation, economic development, HR, planning, zoning, and large tourism operations
- Reported to the mayor and six city council members

Opportunities: Proposed an alternative plan for the construction of two new fire stations and a new public works complex that would eliminate the construction of one building utilizing current structures and saving \$16 - 20 million; Council accepted my plan to eliminate the city police dispatch center in favor of the county 911 center saving over \$400,000 annually; eliminated and consolidated unneeded positions resulting in a net reduction of six positions for a savings of approximately \$400,000; directed key staff to seek piggyback contracts or take informal proposals to avoid automatic use of CMAR resulting in savings of \$330,000 on two different projects from what the CMAR proposed; collaborated with the city engineer and budget director to reserve over a quarter of a million dollars over two years to mill and pave the gateway street into town (project planned for fall of 2024); increased sewer fee to generate an excess of \$1 million in annual revenue for planned ongoing effort to reline or replace aging sewer lines; partnered with Rural Water to bring in consultants to assist the city in identifying an ongoing odor issue and implement action plan to combat it; convinced city council to upgrade sewer plant one in annual stages instead of borrowing \$30 million to perform redesign of downtown plant; guided key staff member to conduct a physical audit of the city's vehicle and equipment fleet and identified 13 vehicles on the city insurance list that the city no longer owned; partnered with state house member to secure \$707,671 in state allocations for city capital projects; tapped personal contacts in Tallahassee to secure \$4-6 million in federal funds for constructing a community building (not yet awarded); united with the Mount Dora Chamber of Commerce to increase welcome center hours of operation to include weekends and many holidays; reserved \$2 million over two years to secure property for expanding needed parking in the downtown; strategized with IT director to secure a software program with devices for tracking downtown available parking spots and for facilitating paid parking.

City Manager, City of Cambridge, MD

2018 - 2021

Population approx. 12,326; regular employees approx. 112; annual budget about \$20 million

- Oversaw city operations and served as the city spokesperson
- Responsible for general, sewer, marina, and sanitation functions
- Prepared and responsible for city budgets
- City has an engineer, an architect, a planner, a contracted accounting firm, and an economic developer in addition to a police chief, fire chief and other department leadership positions
- Reported to the mayor and five city commissioners
- Served as supervisor of city elections

Opportunities: Everyday responsibilities involve working to meet the goals of a diverse council and needs of a very diverse community; worked with department heads and city staff to compile a detailed line-item budget booklet of the city's operations and prepared budget reduction recommendations; in partnership with state representatives, FOP leaders, and firefighter leaders, we proposed at the state house a police service fee in an effort to keep up with neighboring police salaries and benefits and a separate fire apparatus replacement fee to address the need to replace fire trucks (not just increasing property taxes); worked with Oasis marina management company establishing them in their first two years of managing the city's marina and worked with the company on restructuring their agreement in the face of COVID-19 revenue reductions; served as the city representative board member of a new volunteer committee, Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI), on a large waterfront development effort involving the county and the state; teamed up with planning staff, county staff, Habitat for Humanity, and consultants on a neighborhood rehabilitation effort involving federal funds and initiated state and federal grant applications for a neighborhood park; collaborated with the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, the county tourism office, and the county economic development office to promote the city and encourage various downtown revitalization projects; initiated a plan to apply for federal funds to eliminate environmental issues in the vacant, historic city hall that will ultimately lead to renovating and reusing the two-story building with its iconic clocktower; left millions in budget surplus upon my departure.

Educational Sabbatical**2016 – 2018**

Furthered my education by completing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration (concentration in accounting) to compliment my BA and MPA; towards the end of this period, met with several cities to find a new employment opportunity.

City Manager, City of Thomaston, GA**2002 – 2016**

Population approx. 9,500; commercial hub for several counties, regular employees approx. 80, originally approx. 135; annual budget about \$25 million

- Oversaw all city operations and served as the city spokesperson
- Responsible for general, police, fire, public works, water, sewer, electric, and sanitation functions
- Prepared and responsible for all city budgets
- Performed all hiring and firing
- Coordinated most major purchases
- Collaborated with multiple engineering firms and multiple attorneys over the years

Opportunities: Under the leadership of the mayor and city council, our team replaced out more than \$30 million of capital assets and infrastructure including the replacement of approximately one third of the city's estimated 79 miles of water lines, approximately 12% of the city's estimated 68 miles of sanitary sewer lines, approximately 37% of the city's estimated 57 miles of streets, and many miles of sidewalk replacement; doubled the size of Thomaston's largest reservoir adding 1/4 billion gallons of water storage; developed a popular 40-acre passive park with walking trails, water features, picnic and playground areas; reacquired two parks from the county (through service delivery agreement) rebuilding playgrounds, basketball and tennis courts; developed Lake Thomaston, the city's 70-acre reservoir with its 1.6-mile lakeside trail, for use as a new city park and as a tourism draw, with new restroom/pavilion and boathouse/amphitheater facilities; prepared and managed 14 balanced budgets, leaving approximately \$16 million in surplus upon my departure.

City Manager, City of Wellsburg, WV**1998 – 2002**

Population approx. 3,300; regular employees approx. 35; annual budget about \$2.4 million

- Served as chief administrator and chief financial officer
- Responsible for general, water, and sewer functions
- Reported to city council (8 members) and mayor
- Reported to water/sewer board (6 members) and mayor
- Assisted all city boards and committees in bringing ideas to fruition

Opportunities: Under the leadership of the mayor and city council undertook factory tax audits (hired out of town CPA) and brought in \$92,000 in back taxes; initiated commercial garbage bill audits brought in \$17,000 in additional annual revenue; strategized with elected officials, city staff, and citizens on resolving dilapidated housing issues; prepared ADA plan for city hall; managed storm water separation projects; and oversaw approximately \$475,000 in capital improvement projects.

**Director of Purchasing and Personnel,
Director of Personnel****City of Clarksburg, WV 1993–97
1997-98**

Population approx. 18,000; regular employees approx. 220; budget about \$11 million

Purchasing: Organized, created, and reviewed contracts and agreements with vendors

Some Successes: Reduced a number of invoices through consolidated orders and payments; increased use of formal purchase orders; achieved expenditure savings in excess of \$50,000 in last fiscal year; created service contracts and implemented bidding on several items where it had not been done previously; created a draft for a purchasing policies and procedures manual.

Personnel: Created an employee handbook and many personnel forms and policies; designed employee appraisal forms and process; wrote numerous job descriptions; drafted organization charts for all city departments; served as secretary to management team during union contract negotiations; established an employee newsletter; coordinated department safety committees; organized a wellness program.

Some Successes: Developed and implemented policies for reducing sick leave usage; policies helped reduce sick leave usage by more than 35%.

District Executive, Boy Scouts of America, Clarksburg/Parkersburg, WV**1989–91**

- Organized and guided the Boy Scout program in a four-county area of West Virginia; coordinated approximately 36 volunteers.

Education

Master's Degree in Public Administration, West Virginia University, Department of Public Administration, 1993

- Graduate work performed for the Small Community Rural Wastewater Demonstration Project
- Employed as a part-time worker/intern for the City of Clarksburg
- Pi Alpha Alpha National Honor Society for MPA students

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, University of Florida, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 1988

- Florida Blue Key (one of approximately 120 students tapped annually)
- President Pro Tempore of the Student Senate (elected by 80-member body)

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (concentration in accounting), Middle Georgia State University, College of Business, 2017

- President's List Scholar

Certified Purchasing Manager (CPM), Institute for Supply Management (ISM), 1997

- Completed the requirements for the Certified Purchasing Manager Certificate (CPM)
- Passed all four comprehensive examinations

Associations

- International City Managers Association (ICMA)
- Institute of Supply Management (ISM)
- Former Harrison County United Way Allocations Committee Chair
- Former Flint River Council Commissioner
- Former Pine Mountain District Membership Chair and Finance Chair
- Former Wellsburg and Thomaston Kiwanis
- Former Knights of Columbus Financial Secretary, Council in Wellsburg
- Ancient Order of Hibernians
- Eagle Scout

**Mount Dora City Manager Patrick Comiskey
Savings, Grants, and Cost Avoidance
Summary 2021 - 2024**

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| ✓ Advised City to limit construction to just one, new fire station
-\$16 minimum but as much as \$20 million total avoidance | \$16 million |
| ✓ Worked with personal contacts in Tallahassee to secure support for a
community center in NE community (if/when a grant is awarded) | \$4-6 million |
| ✓ Eliminated police dispatching services in favor of using 911
(annual savings of \$400,000) | \$400,000 |
| ✓ Elimination of administration police captain post
(annual savings of \$85,000) | \$85,000 |
| ✓ State Allocation for Donnelly Street Milling/Paving | \$500,000 |
| ✓ Savings by not using CMAR for Liberty Ave. Storm Water project
(one-time savings of \$300,000 or up) | \$300,000 |
| ✓ Directing staff to file Pine Street sewer line invoices to FEMA | \$877,666 |
| ✓ State Allocation for Hilltop Storm water project | \$207,671 |
| ✓ Eliminated Leisure Services Director position & Assistant
(annual savings of \$175,000 in salary alone) | \$175,000 |
| ✓ Elimination HR manager, asst city clerk post, crime analyst
(annual savings of \$180,000 in salary alone) | \$180,000 |
| ✓ Consolidated PIO & Economic Development Director positions
(annual savings of \$60,000 in salary alone) | \$60,000 |
| ✓ Reduction in legal fees FY 21-22 | \$25-35,000 |

✓ Library Simpson House Renovation work without CMAR	\$30,000
✓ Negotiation with CMAR on pay beyond PO on WWTP 1 (below what the mayor agreed to pay the vendor)	\$26,400
✓ Directed staff to perform a physical audit on all vehicles/equipment (discovered 13 vehicles on the insurance we no longer had)	\$26,000
✓ Police supplies proposed for purchase, directed chief to Lowes	\$15,000
✓ Additional interest to be received on one year CD	\$12,000
✓ Directive to request 5% reduction in Street sweeper price	\$9,000
<hr/>	
Estimate/Summary Minimum with Grant	\$22,928,737
Without Community Center Grant (minimum summary)	\$18,928,737

**Mount Dora City Manager Patrick Comiskey
Projects and Actions
Summary 2021 - 2024**

- ✓ Working with Rural Water and outside contractors to dramatically reduce, contain and monitor the hydrogen sulfide odors at the city sewer plant on Rt 441.
- ✓ Worked with city engineer to set up a \$3 million dollar project to mill and pave Donnelly Street from 5th to Limit. Worked with Rep Keith Truenow to get a \$500,000 allocation from the state.
- ✓ Setting the stage for replacing or relining sewer lines in the city with an annual commitment of \$1.5 to \$2 million annually with \$500,000 in annual assistance from the state. Promote a constant effort to identify ways to consolidate sewer lift station locations.
- ✓ Working with the Chamber of Commerce to get the "Welcome Center" open on the weekends and many holidays.
- ✓ Set aside \$2 million (after two years) for property purchase for parking solution.
- ✓ Working with County government to set up a plan for a three-year pilot project to establish bus shuttle service for weekends with the federal government paying for 50% of the program (starting in the late summer of 2025).
- ✓ Identifying multiple lots for possible purchase for adding parking spaces; had an agent approach the property owners for purchase prices.
- ✓ Worked with DOT officials in DeLand and Tallahassee to get a temporary traffic light installed at the entrance way to the Lakes of Mount Dora.
- ✓ Worked with Apopka officials to develop agreement to transfer city reclaimed water customers in Orange County from Mount Dora to Apopka.
- ✓ Recommended city-pull back from \$30 million dollar loan plan for WWTP 1 and instead prioritize smaller projects at the plant each year.
- ✓ Put together a plan for constructing a community center on Lincoln Street and received buy-in from state community development officials.
- ✓ Establishing a full-time urban forester position, prepared hire letter to finalist to be hired in January 2024.

- ✓ Initiated ongoing, annual fire hydrant testing by the fire fighters so they would know how to operate them in an actual fire event and the hydrants would be in working order.
- ✓ Initiated ongoing, annual pre-fire inspections of all commercial building by fire fighters so they would be familiar with the insides of the buildings should a genuine fire break out.
- ✓ Picked up the languishing pickleball court project and carried it to the finish line.
- ✓ Directed staff to install fire alarm systems in one water plant and two sewer plant facilities that did not have them.
- ✓ Directed a staff member to audit city vehicle inventory and discover 13 vehicles on the city vehicle insurance even though we did not have them anymore.
- ✓ Pulled back approximately \$350,000 in proposed purchases in 2022-2023 FY, deactivated many procurement cards limiting number for each department, and required departments to receive approval from the finance director or city manager in order to make purchase over a set number for the last two months of the year in an effort to offset underbudgeting of health insurance costs.
- ✓ Moving staff out of the Simpson house permanently so it could be renovated.
- ✓ Established a social media coordinator position and began a city social media presence and improved posting of information ahead of time.
- ✓ Increased transparency at city hall posting council meeting agendas earlier than in the past.
- ✓ Directed staff to contract with a collection agency to submit written off collectibles to further collection potential

Candidate Introduction

Section 7**Patrick Comiskey**

EDUCATION

Masters in Public Administration (MPA) – West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
 Bachelors of Science (B.S.) in Business Administration with a Concentration in Accounting – Middle Georgia State University, Macon, GA
 Bachelors of Arts (B.A.) in Sociology – University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
 Certified Purchasing Manager (CPM) – Institute for Supply Management, Tempe, AZ

EXPERIENCE

City Manager, Mount Dora, FL	2021 – 2024
City Manager, Cambridge, MD	2018 – 2021
City Manager, Thomaston, GA	2002 – 2016
City Manager, Wellsburg, WV	1998 – 2002
Personnel Director, Clarksburg, WV	1993 – 1998
Purchasing Director, Clarksburg, WV	1993 – 1997
District Executive, Boy Scouts of America	1989 – 1991

BACKGROUND

The City of Mount Dora, located north of Orlando, is a tourist town. The community currently has a population of about 18,000 and was built in the orange grove belt of central Florida. With the growth of metropolitan Orlando and Florida, in general, housing and commercial development have replaced the orange groves and tourism and retirement incomes are the economic drivers. The city has an iconic downtown that many describe as a New England style town. The city downtown is located along a slope off the shore of Lake Dora providing a unique geographic feature for Florida.

The City of Mount Dora has a general fund budget of \$25 million and a total fund operating budget in excess of \$130 million and 250 full-time employees. Eleven department and division heads, the executive assistant, and the city clerk report to the city manager. The city has traditional enterprise fund operations including water, sewer, and garbage along with storm water and electric. The city also owns a city marina and lighthouse.

The three (3) most pressing issues facing the city include infrastructure replacement, downtown parking, and rapid growth.

1. The city has aged sewer lines that need to be replaced - having water infiltrating the collection system during rain events and periodic line breakages. Parts of the city collection

Section 7**Patrick Comiskey**

system become overwhelmed resulting in sewage overflowing manholes during rain events. The city also has sixty lift stations to maintain.

2. Downtown parking is the number one issue of the downtown business community. The city has secured a real estate agent to secure property purchase proposals from property owners on 5th for the long-range purpose of building a parking garage. The agent has also discussed the purchase price of multiple property parcels off of Highland Avenue. The Highland Avenue parcels are being considered for the development of satellite parking lots. The city is working on a plan with the county government to establish a shuttle bus system on the weekends and city holidays to alleviate parking limitations in the downtown areas.

3. Rapid growth is a universal concern throughout the city and county. Lake County is one of the fastest growing counties in one of the fastest growing states. Many residents are in favor of the city government taking steps to curtail and limit the growth. The state has struggled to keep up with the increased amounts of traffic on local state roads. The city has capacity issues requiring a major expansion of a sewer plant and the probable construction of a new plant east of the city if elected officials continue to approve development projects. Also, the county recognizes the limitations on water supply but ignores the issue when considering development.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

My wife is a Florida native and was raised on the Florida and Georgia coasts. I attended school at the University of Florida and have many friends spread out across the state so we both have strong Florida connections. One of my favorite classes was Florida history and I have a deep appreciation for Florida. We are at a point in my career where quality of life ranks higher than other career objectives. I have accomplished more than most could hope to achieve in a career in local government, so I no longer need to climb the ladder.

I think Juno Beach leaders are looking for a seasoned manager who is interested in taking what he has learned and experienced and help the city leaders formulate consensus and govern effectively. One of the things I like about Juno Beach is its size. Working in a small city government gives me, as the manager, an opportunity to work with more people directly. I think people are going to want a manager who is visible and assessable, and I have always been both of those things. Additionally, my dog and I walk more than two miles a day, every day. We meet a lot of people, and we typically walk the business district multiple times during the week. We visit city parks every weekend, so we meet a number of people and see, first hand, any maintenance or infrastructure issues. I have worked in multiple environments and understand the high expectations of citizens and have successfully worked under those expectations.

Section 7

Patrick Comiskey

I enjoy bringing people together to work on a problem then stepping back and allowing the group to work out solutions. I also enjoy doing the same with staff members and allowing the staff leader to implement the plan. Management by objectives is my preferred framework. I will ask department and division leaders to put together goals for the year and the two of us will finalize a list, incorporate those into the budget request, then meet monthly to review the progress. I also believe in management by walking around, visiting job sites and workstations is commonplace for me. I enjoy seeing forward progress.

Staff members would advise that I allow them to run their department or division but will give them projects and assignments to complete. I think they would say I am fair, knowledgeable, and open to suggestions and I am someone who would not ask them to do anything I would not be willing to do myself. They will also tell you I expect results and will hold people accountable. With a small staff, like Juno Beach, team projects are a natural. I want staff to enjoy their jobs and be successful.

City officials will acknowledge I have good budget and financial skills and that I am a humble person who interacts well with the public. I think they would say I am respectful to people even when they are not and that I work to help elected officials find success and achieve objectives. In each city where I have worked, I have made more documents and information accessible to the city officials and the public and have increased transparency.

My strengths are financial and project management. I have a natural knack for budgeting and solving financial dilemmas as well as fiscal budgeting. Additionally, I interact well with a diversity of people. I am open-minded and I try to always improve myself and adapt to other people. I like people and I try to treat others as I would want others to treat me.

A weakness I have might be that I give people more time or too many chances. I always like to give people the benefit of the doubt, especially if he/she has a positive attitude and I think they are sincerely trying. I also like to give people opportunities from within; however, this burned me in Mount Dora, where those I gave a chance to but chose not to promote or gave counseling to for poor performance are the ones who are identified in the Greene report.

Management by objectives is my measure for how successful the department is and how the organization is performing. We will set goals for the organization and the departments and meet monthly to review how each department leader is performing. If someone is not meeting objectives, I will work with the person to reach objectives. I like for the town council and I to set up a list of five-year goals and then working with staff and citizens break those goals down into tasks and start knocking them out. We accomplished two different five-year goal sets while I was in Thomaston.

Section 7

Patrick Comiskey

My greatest achievement thus far is probably the development of the Lake Thomaston Reservoir in Georgia. This was a multi-million-dollar project that required the acquisition of land, setting up a public bond issue, working with engineers, biologists, state regulatory agencies, the Army Corps of Engineers, neighboring property owners, the state's electric utility, the railroad, and two different general contractors. This was a multi-year project that resulted in the city having a half a billion-gallon reservoir that insulated the city from late summer droughts.

My greatest failure was in Mount Dora as the city manager. Once the mayor started actively undermining my position as the city manager, I should have started a search for a new position. This would have been best for me and Jane, since my contract had been violated. The lesson is you cannot change the behavior of others so after you have tried to unsuccessfully and the support structure in place to regulate roles and behavior are not working, then accept this and move on.

I have had to terminate many workers over the years. I have never enjoyed it, but it ultimately has to be done from time to time. I generally give workers progressive discipline with as much as a five-strike system. The first a verbal warning, undocumented; then, a documented verbal warning (written and signed received by the worker). Third, a formal written warning and, fourth, a written warning with time off without pay. The next step is termination from employment. If the violation is more severe, then fewer or no steps will occur. In general, the city manager is the final appeal but with termination cases, I have had the city judge serve as a hearing officer and the employee has been allowed to appeal to him to hear the case. I have allowed the employee to be represented by an attorney or other individual and the city judge renders a written finding. Cities have different practices on this and I will adapt to the policies in place.

Sometimes, we have to terminate someone immediately. I tell each newly hired worker how termination works and what will result in immediate termination. These will include stealing and driving DUI (for those who drive a city vehicle). Anyone who is driving a city vehicle as part of their position description will be terminated if he is caught DUI. We had a firefighter caught shoplifting who had to be terminated. I typically sit down with the person and the department head and review the problem and walk with the department head through each part of it.

The person accepting the job in Juno Beach will have to be a good listener. A community with active citizens is going to want access to the manager and elected officials. Development and permit issues are typically hot topics with citizens approaching the city government with different perspectives from multiple sides. It will be important for the city to answer this feedback and be seen as ultra transparent in city operations. This will require regular social media posting, monitoring, and providing responses. Pro-active communication is important and keeping the city council regularly informed is paramount. I think the person taking this job will need to be visible in the community and will need to circulate as much as possible with different

Section 7

Patrick Comiskey

groups of citizens. I will identify the coffee clubs in town and will try to make an appearance particularly when a hot topic comes up. If we cannot give good answers to tough questions then that tells us we might need to re-evaluate what we are thinking, planning, or doing.

Infrastructure needs will be a major concern for the city government. I will need to evaluate the history of the existing infrastructure and meet with the city engineers and long-time citizens to review the current road, beach, and utility status against the city's capital plans. The services and other infrastructure provided by other players also needs to be evaluated so we know where to advocate on behalf of the town. An example, the county owns and maintains the pier; but it is more likely a priority of the town's that it is kept in top shape. I have decades of experience in working with other utilities, governments, and agencies on service delivery. In fact, I was involved with taking a county government to court over service delivery which resulted in city property owners securing about a 1.8 mil reduction in their county property tax rate.

In my first six months, I would first sit down with each city elected official and hear about what projects and programs each is passionate about. What each official wants to see from the city government. And what they would like to see accomplished. I would also meet with each department head and visit each building, parcel of property, and piece of equipment the department is responsible to maintain as well as review the personnel files of each city worker. I will want to meet as many stakeholders as possible and also stop by a couple businesses each week and introduce myself and hear what each thinks we should do and find out what we are doing right. Additionally, it will be helpful to review how we communicate with the public and gather ideas on how we can do more. And I will want to evaluate the budget booklet and begin gathering information for the next budget cycle.

Naturally, transparency and meeting members of the media will be a priority. I would plan to meet with members to hear what they think the city is doing right and where we can improve and make certain they have my cell number and know they are able to call me whenever they need to do so unless the city has a different public spokesperson from me. In most cases, I will send out information briefs and provide them with a copy of our council meeting notices, agendas, and packets. In general, I have city officials respond when it is good news to report, and I will respond when it is bad news.

Council members will be concerned by the content of the news broadcasts regarding my tenure in Mount Dora. I will do whatever I can to alleviate any concerns, I received a good evaluation after my first year of service and city council awarded me a \$17 thousand increase in my annual pay. In summary, we had a new mayor come on board after I was hired and she wanted to be the city manager. She withdrew from the November mayor's race shortly after I resigned. I provided a list of all the things that were accomplished and millions in operating funds saved during my tenure.

Section 7

Patrick Comiskey

I will utilize any tool available to communicate with the public. I find it useful to have an active social media presence. In Cambridge, we brought our followers up to over 13,000 people on our main city Facebook page while interacting with the public and sharing information in a transparent, constructive manner.

I would not suspect anyone in Mount Dora will contact anyone in Juno Beach regarding me. In fact, if you watch the films from the meetings, you will see the community activists were in support of me and you will not see any citizens complaining about me.

I walk my dog early in the morning and again at night. On weekends and holidays, we take longer walks all over town. Weaver will likely become a well-known character in Juno Beach. He has also opened the door to introductions for me of various people I may not have met otherwise. Additionally, Jane and I both believe in community involvement and are active volunteers. We also try to attend as many local events as possible. We enjoy the interaction as well as the sense of community. Jane and I also like to hike, bike, kayak/canoe, and travel (currently, we have seen all 48 contiguous states together!). We will likely take trips to area state and national parks. We also enjoy watching college football and try to attend a Florida game each year. We both enjoy reading and learning about history, particularly the local history of the places we visit. In the past, I have helped the Boy Scout Council recruit membership and raise money. I will only do so in Juno Beach if the city council approves it.

ADJECTIVES THAT DESCRIBE ME

- Dedicated/Enthusiastic
- Caring/Kind
- Prepared/Seasoned/Experienced
- Conscientious/Thorough
- Ethical/Honest
- Reliable/Accessible

REASON FOR LEAVING CURRENT POSITION

I enjoyed working for the City of Mount Dora. I received a good evaluation after my first year of service and city council awarded me a \$17 thousand increase in my annual pay. I also had strong support in the neighborhoods and business community. Unfortunately, a new mayor was elected after I was hired and she wanted to be the city manager. Eventually, the mayor's continual undermining of my position with junior staff made my position untenable. I chose to accept the payout, which was the highest amount the state statutes allowed, and tenured my resignation.

Section 7**Patrick Comiskey**

Two city council members voted against accepting my resignation. Both mayor candidates in the November 2024 election will say good things about me.

MOST RECENT SALARY

My most recent salary at City of Mount Dora was \$196,350.

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
PATRICK C. COMISKEY**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County	
Lake County, FL	No Records Found
Dorchester County, MD	No Records Found
Macon, GA	No Records Found
Talbot County, GA	No Records Found
Upson County, GA	No Records Found
State	
Florida	No Records Found
Maryland	No Records Found
Georgia	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County	
Lake County, FL	No Records Found
Dorchester County, MD	No Records Found
Macon, GA	No Records Found
Talbot County, GA	No Records Found
Upson County, GA	No Records Found
Federal	
Florida	No Records Found
Maryland	No Records Found
Georgia	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

Florida	No Records Found
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Credit

Excellent

Personal Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Sex Offender Registry

Not Listed

Education

Confirmed

**Background Check Summary for
PATRICK C. COMISKEY**

Employment

Confirmed

Social MediaNothing of Concern Found

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

Background Check Summary for
PATRICK C. COMISKEY
Personal Disclosure

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: Patrick Comiskey

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony? No
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident? No
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so? No
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit? No
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit? No
1. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated, driving under the influence, operating a vehicle impaired, or a similar offense? No
6. Have you ever sued a current or former employer? No
7. Please list links to all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one. facebook.com/patrickcomiskey,3
linkedin.com/in/patrick-comiskey-66855448/
8. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism? Yes Television and news sites in central Florida Reference: Mount Dora
9. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant. None myself, but the cities I have worked have been

Attested to: Patrick C. Comiskey
Signature of Applicant

*DSK Lindsey Green Contract Issues –
Bob Gordon Oct 28. 2023*

DSK Contract Issues – 28 October 2023

How did the contract come about and what issues brought the City to that point?

It all began during the 20 June Council meeting which included an agenda item “Conclusion of City Manager Discussion”. It was agreed by vote of the Council to pursue a Contract with an unbiased 3rd party consultant for ‘Conflict Resolution’ not solely with the City Manager, but all direct reports, the Mayor, the Executive Assistant, etc. Councilman Cataldo made that very clear in his comments during the discussion which can be watched at ~ minute 1:18:30 during that meeting.

It is important to note that during the discussion where Council asked Councilman Bryant to work with Councilman Dawson to develop a Statement of Work and contract with a firm to conduct conflict resolution services, Sherry Sutphen, at that time the City Attorney cautioned Mr. Bryant to follow all purchasing rules and regulations. His motion was revised to include such language (in accordance with purchasing policy) before the vote.

A motion was made to prepare a Statement of Work and allow Counselman Dawson to contact multiple sources to seek a quote for ‘Conflict Resolution’ to work within the City in order to resolve and reach closure of the “City Manager Discussion”. The intent was to have a consultant firm under contract by 18 July and close the City Manager discussions. That motion passed with a vote of 5-1, with the Mayor voting no.

On July 18 City Council meeting the efforts previously agreed upon for closure of the City Manager discussion becomes convoluted and confusing when another issue was raised regarding the City Manager. The Mayor brings up yet another subject, aka “Whistleblower Letter” but she mentions it by reference, and it was not specifically call it the “Whistleblower Letter”. The term “Whistleblower Letter” came up later during various discussions. This “Whistle Blower Letter” was written by the interim HR Director making accusations against the City Manager. The letter is not dated but was addressed to the Mayor and Council Members. It is not clear when or how it was submitted, nor is it clear how it was handled at the time, and how it was handled should be a topic of different discussions.

As the Council meeting continued, Councilman Crail was tasked to contact Atty Jeff Mandel (Labor Atty with Fisher & Phillips Law Firm in Orlando) for 2-3 recommendations on how to proceed with the issue, i.e. the “Whistleblower Letter”. No specific instructions were given, he was merely asked to contact the attorney for recommendations on a path forward because Council was unsure on how to proceed without any appearance of a conflict of interest from any Council member or City function.

During the 24 July City Budget Workshop Councilman Crail gave an update on his action. He had reached out to Jeff Mandel stating the City was looking for 2 or 3 recommendations, and had received only 1; contact Attorney Lindsay Greene. Ms. Greene had conducted the ‘John O’Grady’ investigation for the City, and is familiar with Mt. Dora. Councilman Crail stated he had also reached out to Ms. Greene but had not had a return call. He hopes to be in the position to provide more complete details and information at the next Council Meeting on 1 August.

Note: It is important for the reader to review the video of this meeting and hear exactly what Councilman Crail says with regard to this investigation and how it is intended to address only 1 issue in a fair and unbiased investigation.

During the 1 August City Council Meeting the discussions continued. This issue was Action Item No. 1 on the agenda. Mr. Crail provided an update to his discussions with Mr. Mandel and the only recommendation Mr. Mandel made was to use Ms. Lindsey Greene, an employee of DSK Law. Councilman Crail stated that Ms. Greene had contacted him on 25 July, and also provided an engagement letter. That letter is dated July 27, 2023 and required an acceptance signature by Marc Crail, the Vice Mayor. That letter states it is a "Retainer Agreement for Representation".

Councilman Rolfson made a motion to appoint Lindsey Greene, and discussions ensued. The bottom-line result was for the City to enter into an Agreement with DSK, hiring attorney Lindsay Greene to investigate the "Whistleblower Letter / Complaint".

DSK Contract and PO:

At some point on 1 Aug Mr. Crail executed the retainer agreement. I don't know at what time it was signed, it isn't time stamped, only signed and dated 1 August, 2023.

It is very important to note that during a previous City Council Meeting where Council asked Councilman Bryant to work with Councilman Dawson to develop a Statement of Work and contract with a firm to conduct conflict resolution services, Sherry Sutphen, at that time the City Attorney cautioned Mr. Bryant to follow all purchasing rules and regulations. His motion was revised to include such language (in accordance with purchasing policy) before the vote.

HOWEVER on this subject and this action she did not say a single word about following the City's Purchasing Regulations / Policy.

Assume the vote was to enter into a contractual relationship with DSK for legal services of Lindsey Greene, then one must also assume that instruction included the direction to follow the Purchasing Rules & Regulations.

Assuming the motion was to enter into the Agreement with DSK in accordance with Purchasing Policy, one must ask:

1. Where is the Sole Source Justification document required to award a contract absent of competition?
2. Where is the requisition authorizing the necessary funding?
3. Where is the Statement of Work used to define the scope of the efforts being sought?
4. Where is the written delegation of authority which gave Mr. Crail the authority to execute the Agreement?
5. What is the maximum liability of the City under the Agreement?
6. What is the period of performance? i.e. When will the Scope of Work (whatever that is) be completed?
7. Where is the Price Analysis which shows the pricing (hourly rates, total price, max. liability) to be fair and reasonable?
8. Was this Agreement reviewed by Legal? If so, where is the written approval from that review?

Please note paragraph 6 of this Agreement states that all notices and information regarding this matter will be sent to Mr. Crail. This makes him the primary point of contact for the City on all matters and issues in this regard. This aspect of the Agreement was not followed.

It's also important to note the Agreement put the City's Purchasing Manager, Director of Finance and the City Manager in the awkward position of ratifying this Agreement. Consequently when DSK invoiced for "Legal Services Rendered Through 8/31/23" in the amount of \$23,695, a City Purchase Order had to be issued to cover the costs. Note: That invoice includes \$210 in charges incurred prior to the formal execution of the Agreement by the City on 1 Aug. The City issued PO No. 23-00736 on 8/18/23, in the amount of \$23,695 for "Legal Retainer for the Investigation and Related Expenses Through 9/30/23". Note: Prior to receipt of an invoice, the City issued a PO in the exact amount that was invoiced 9 business days later. How could that happen? Coincidence?

There are many more unexplained issues with the Agreement with DSK, but it is most important to understand what exactly was the City seeking under this Agreement. It was intended to be a single item, investigate the "Whistleblower Letter / Allegations" and nothing else, so why was Ms. Sutphen so heavily involved with guiding Ms. Greene's investigation when Mr. Crail was the primary point of contact for the City.

Attachment to DSK Contract Issues

All City, Meetings cited in this paper are listed below. Each meeting cited includes links to each specific meeting and provides a transcription of pertinent summary discussion matters.

20 June Council Meeting:

The agenda included 'City Manager Discussion Conclusion'. Councilman Rolfson was not in attendance making it impossible for Council to vote to terminate or suspend the City Manager as all Council Members must be in attendance per the City Charter. However, there was extensive discussion by the Council and the public. It should be noted that the Council determined that the City Manager should not be terminated, rather a consultant should be hired to conduct conflict resolution and team building. After nearly an hour of discussion, the Council voted to identify a consultant. All Council members except for the Mayor voted in favor (6-1). Only the Mayor voted NO. A clear indication of her determination to remove the City Manager.

A link to the video of that Council Meeting is found here.

<https://mountdorafi.portal.civicclerk.com/event/1418/media>

Pertinent discussions begin at ~55:13 minutes into the video:

- At minute ~55:13: Mayor Stile opens the discussion by announcing the "next action item is City Manager Discussion, Conclusion."
- At minute ~55:24: After an 11 second pause, City Manager Patrick Comiskey states: "... I had an attack made against my name, my reputation with an effort to try to take away my livelihood and my career, I take those things seriously, I responded to every action of substance and they were all shown to be false. The one thing that was true was that I have recommended to the mayor and Council that we not approve the JPA that was presented and approved the other night. ... I told the mayor that and the City attorney when they were in my office or on the phone with me and wanted me to cancel the work session on it. I would like for this matter to be resolved... The surveys I was very pleased to see how positive the results were and I'd like for the Council to wrap this up and close it and let's get on with the business of the City and stop tearing apart City workers and get back to business."
- At minute ~1:01:59: Councilman Bryant continues "... Now, as far as where we go from here, I think, like everybody else on Council, we've spent a lot of time thinking about this, a lot of time and I think we do need to pursue having a third party consultant but not a third party consultant who is going to come in and investigate further... what I am more concerned about is trying to get past this juncture and get us back where we should be as a City government... I think a third party consultant would probably be someone along the lines of somebody skilled in conflict resolution, somebody who's skilled with personal growth, training ... Once again it's been a little over a month and we just need to get back on track, we need to start the healing process, and I think this is a way to do it. And I don't know that

we need to necessarily bring this up at every meeting in the future as long as we know that the process is moving forward”.

- At minute ~1:03:45: Councilman Cataldo clarifies that Mr. Bryant is not suggesting termination of the City Manager, rather having a consultant for improvement.
- At minute ~1:03:57: Councilman Bryant responds, “... yes... and when I say conflict resolution, this isn’t necessarily pointed directly at the City Manager, it involves the Mayor, the Executive Assistant, it involves any number of people that have come up in conversations and frankly it probably may involve Council members ourselves”.
- At minute ~1:04:44: Councilman Dawson agrees that “there needs to be some sort of healing or team effectiveness that has to happen within his team. According to the survey, the Management is equally divided so they need to come together and work as a team. Patrick shared with him some plans around communication. He agrees that someone should be brought in to work with Patrick and his team. “It’s not just Patrick but it is all of his direct reports working together”.
- At minute ~1:09:49: Councilman Bryant “... I don’t want to see us get too far off track here as to what the question is before the Council right now, and that is, where are we going from here? Where are we going from tonight. Maybe to put a name to a proposal to contact a third party or a consultant for the purposes of conflict resolution and moving forward.... (He proposed Mr. Dawson or Mr. Crail)
After discussion (Mr. Crail is going to be out of the country, and Mr. Dawson will not be In attendance at the next Council meeting are not available to aid in the search).
- At minute ~1:12:22: Mr. Crail suggests Mr. Dawson and Mr. Comiskey work together to identify a firm or consultant. Mr. Dawson agrees to have information for Mr. Comiskey to present at the next Council meeting on the 18th of July.
- At minute ~1:12: 55: Mr. Comiskey asks, “as a point of information I would like for this to include the root of the problem and not just symptoms.”
- At minute ~1:14:13: Councilman Bryant starts to offers a motion, “to authorize Mr. Dawson to contact a consultant or consulting firm to assist the City in moving forward with conflict resolution and any recommendations for personal growth in behalf of its’ employees. And that that recommendation be presented to Council at the next meeting”.
- At minute ~1:15:05: City Attorney Sherry Sutphen interjects stating the effort must be accomplished in accordance with “Purchasing formalities”, then recommends creating a scope of work to give to a couple of firms to give quotes for their work. “If your Motion authorizes Mr. Dawson in conjunction with Patrick to write that scope...”
- At ~ minute 1:17: Mayor Stiles asks Counsel Bryant to add that to his motion.
- At minute ~1:19: Counselman Cataldo speaks of the main purpose of the agenda action item being discussed is “Conclusion of City Manager Discussion”. He asks for clarification of the topic, i.e. what is the “conclusion”. And finally states “So we’re pursuing the ‘Conclusion’ as hiring a consultant by the 18th of July.”
- At minute ~1:20:25: Following much discussion Mr. Bryant offers the motion. “I would move that this Council authorize Councilman Dawson to make contact with consultants in

accordance with our purchasing policy to obtain quotes to move forward with conflict resolution given (the uh) what's happened up to this point with the City Staff and Council". Mr. Walker seconded the motion.

- At minute ~ 1:52:05: The motion is re-read and a vote is taken. The result 5-1 with Mayor Stile voting NO

July 18 City Council:

During this meeting discussions focusing on Labor Attorney Issues were opened.

Link to meeting can be found here

<https://mountdorfl.portal.civicclerk.com/event/1419/media>

- At minute ~ 42:00: Agenda item 8, was moved from the Consent Agenda to the Action Item Number 3. This item is for the Mayor to execute an engagement letter with Fisher & Phillips, LLP for legal representation regarding FOP and general labor and employment services.

At minute ~ 57:28: The City Manager begins to describe the reason for the item. This issue came about when the City Manager discovered that services from this firm have been on-going for years without an executed engagement letter. The sole intent was to ensure any future services provided by this firm were contracted in accordance with existing Purchasing and City Policies.

During the discussion Councilman Rolfson challenges the statements made by the City Manager with a series of crafted questions related to policy, and then looks to the Ms. Sutphen for confirmations. This takes the discussion to another level and Ms. Sutphen adamantly states it is her job to handle personnel issues.

In our opinion it is inherently obvious by the questions raised, the ensuing discussions and the way this topic was addressed, this approach had been colluded between Mayor Stile, Ms. Sutphen Mr. Rolfson. Although precedent for any legal involvement relative to city personnel issues had previously been resolved using the Fisher & Phillips firm, the Mayor, City Atty and Councilman were determined to have Ms. Sutphen investigate the "Whistleblower Letter".

- At minute ~1:03:09: Mayor Stile asked Councilman Rolfson if he had seen the letter from the interim HR Director?

NOTE: This is the very first mention or reference the "Whistleblower Letter" during a Council Meeting.

- At minute ~1:11:30: Councilman Bryant makes a motion to table the discussion until a later date after more details and facts revolving around the use of the law firm Fisher & Phillips are obtained. That motion passes later in the evening with a unanimous vote.

- At minute ~1:20:25: Mayor Stile initiates a question to Ms. Sutphen, how does the process work when the HR Director files a complaint against the City Manager, and the two are supposed to work together on personnel issues, how does the process work in that situation? (Again, an inference to the “Whistleblower Letter”.

In her reply to the question Ms. Sutphen recommends Council reach out to Jeff Mandell, an attorney who practices for Fisher & Phillips. This seems odd since given the positions she and Councilman Rolfson had taken earlier about using the firm for personnel issues. Nonetheless, Council agrees to allow Councilman Crail, with support from Ms. Sutphen as needed, to contact Jeff Mandell for advice on how to proceed with the complaint from the HR Director.

July 24 Budget Workshop

A link to the video of this workshop is found here:

[July 24, 2023 City Council Budget Workshop: Governmental Funds and Internal Services • • CivicClerk](#)

- At Minute ~2:38:30: Councilman Crail provides an update on his task from the previous Council Meeting. He explains what he has done, and the only recommendation he received was to contact Ms. Lindsey Greene. He also states this should be a “one and done” type of investigation, it is only needed for this particular instance because normally the HR Director and the City Manager would work together to resolve personnel issues. However in this instance, both of those individuals are involved and we need a neutral and fair investigation of the issue.

1 Aug 23 City Council:

A link to the video of that Council Meeting is found here.

<https://mountdorafi.portal.civicclerk.com/event/1420/media>

- At Minute ~22:38: The Council moves to discuss the Action Items, and the first item was to continue discussions relative to hiring an outside legal firm to investigate the complaint against the City Manager.
- At Minute ~22:59: Councilman Crail presents an update on his action from the previous Council meeting. He reminds Council of the update he had provided during the 24 July meeting, where he had talked with Attorney Jeff Mandel, and also said he had reached out to Ms. Greene, but had not received a reply. He states that Ms. Greene contacted him the next day (25 July).
- At Minute ~25:32: Rolfson makes a motion to appoint Lindsey Greene to investigate employee complaints against the City Manager. (NOTE: He had bragged on how well she did previous work for the City, but he couldn’t recall her last name, nor could he remember the name of the Law Firm. He also struggled to actually clearly state the motion. Also it’s strange the Mayor was quick to provide the name of the firm.)

It is very confusing to understand what exactly his motion actually is and what it entails.

Discussions ensue with Crissy going into an emotional tirade.

Rolfson wants to read his speech which culminates in a motion to suspend the CM, however he does look at Crissy and say he has more to add, but should they vote on the current motion first, which they agree to do.

- At Minute ~34:40: Jeananne holds a vote on the issue, which passes 7-0.

NOTE: At no point in time did she read the motion being addressed. But it is assumed they were voting on entering into a contractual relationship with DSK, using its employee Lindsey Greene to conduct an investigation.

It is also very important to note that during a previous City Council Meeting where Council asked Councilman Bryant to work with Councilman Dawson to develop a Statement of Work and contract with a firm to conduct conflict resolution services, Sherry Sutphen, at that time the City Attorney cautioned Mr. Bryant to follow all purchasing rules and regulations. His motion was revised to include such language (in accordance with purchasing policy) before the vote.

HOWEVER on this subject and this action she did not say a single word about following the City's Purchasing Regulations / Policy.

Assume the vote was to enter into a contractual relationship with DSK for legal services of Lindsey Greene, then one must also assume that instruction included the direction to follow the Purchasing Rules & Regulations.

So in addition to the previous questions raised in this document, we are now left with the previous situation where we're still waiting on something to be done from previous Council Meetings which called for a Contract with some entity for Conflict Resolution and thus bring "Closure of City Manager Discussions".

*Former HR Director Support Letter
For Mr. Comiskey*

January 8, 2024

RE: Investigation that was conducted by Lyndsey Green on Patrick Comiskey on behalf of the City of Mount Dora.

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my understanding that this investigation was to determine if a whistle blower claim filed against the city by the Interim HR Director held merit. The investigator asked council if should could further investigate incidents that were being brought to her attention. The City Council voted "no" until this investigation was completed. The investigator did not heed the wishes of council but continued going down rabbit holes. Most surprising, was that the investigator opined throughout her report making it appear the answers of those she was investigating were different than what was said or given.

For example, she opined that Patrick did not take my advice when that is not true at all nor is that what I said during my questioning. Lyndsey Green said, "Mr. Comiskey obviously did not give much weight to Ms. Kraynik's opinion because he appointed Ms. Helfant the Interim Human Resources Director over Ms. Kraynik's recommendation (albeit Ms. Helfant was appointed prior to having facilitated the survey)."

The common theme I see through out the report is that the people that were interviewed were all relatively new in their positions. Most of them had been promoted during Patrick's tenure. I do not know who created the witness list and why certain people were included and others were excluded. All Directors were not included in the interviews.

Patrick Comiskey is the CEO of the City. He is privy to much information and relies on his staff to help him gather additional information so he can make the best possible decisions for the City. A Director level individual should give their opinion to Patrick especially if their opinion is different from his. But at the end of the Day, Patrick is the City Manager. His decision stands and should be executed and supported by his staff. Just because a staff member does not understand everything behind the decision (and sometimes are not privy to this information) does not mean that Patrick is wrong. It means that they need to do their jobs and execute his plan. He is responsible for all Hiring and Terminations in the City. This task is usually conducted by his appointee, the HR Director. As the former HR Director, I never would have hired an employee's spouse, much less a Director's spouse, without first informing the City Manager. I also would never have instigated an investigation against anyone in the City without first making the City Manager aware of the situation. HR does not work in a silo. Employees are the City's greatest asset and its greatest liability. It is imperative that the City Manager is apprised of all situations that involve employees. If the interim HR Director was not keeping the City Manager properly informed, then these duties were fairly removed from their charge.

I felt that this report was rife with whining, either misunderstanding or all out lies, and a lot of hearsay. This is coupled with the investigator interjecting her own opinions and asking leading questions. I found numerous untruths in the report and incidents where a situation was taken out of context and made into something it was not.

I also feel that the employees were afraid of retaliation from the Mayor. Mount Dora as a City does not have a diversified job market. It is a tourist town and most of the jobs are either in hospitality or in the Medical Field. (Due to the number of retirees that move there.) Employees need their jobs. Mayor Chrissy Stile made it clear that she wanted Patrick fired. I believe this stems from his decision to hire a seasoned and experienced fire Chief instead of promoting an inexperienced Fire Chief who also happens to be the Mayors friend who she frequently goes out with socially. The employees had to choose a side so they chose a side that they thought would benefit them the most and protect them from the Mayors retaliation. If the Mayor was successful in firing Patrick, then any employee that sided with him would be next in line for termination. I have heard that she made that very clear in statements to employees.

It is also interesting to note that the investigator primarily spoke to employees who had negative things to say about Patrick. Most of the people she spoke with had received promotions from Patrick into their positions and had held them for less than 2 years. She did not include interviews from employees that were positive about Patrick. As the former HR Director of Mount Dora, I have only positive things to say about City Manager Patrick Comiskey. However, when she spoke to me, she only asked me about 2 incidents that Patrick brought up in his interview and nothing more. (And then she added her own opinion to change what I said into something completely different. See page 50 2nd paragraph.)

I do not know who Lyndsey reported to during this investigative process. I believe that she was given a charge to remove Patrick from his office. I do not feel that this was a fact-finding investigation but instead was a witch hunt to build a case against the City Manager.

Patrick has been very fair in promoting both men and women into higher positions. In the two years that I worked with him, I never heard him raise his voice or utter a curse word. He is the epitome of professionalism and is very experienced and intelligent. (I also never witnessed him falling asleep in a meeting and we were in plenty together.) Just because some Directors want to work in Silos and not keep their City Manager properly informed does not make him a bad manager. It actually makes them bad directors and mid managers. I am ashamed of many of my former fellow co-workers.

This is a travesty beyond belief. However, Patrick can overcome this and continue being the professional City Manager he has always been. Patrick should not be removed from his position. Patrick is the only person I know that can re-build the City and the employee relationships from the inside.

If you would like further information or discussion, please reach out to me at any time.

Sincerely,



Sharon Kraynik

Former HR Director for the City of Mount Dora

*Recommendation Letter from
Mayor Rideout*

Judge Stephen W. Rideout (Ret.)

Advisor to
Governments, Foundations & Non-Profits on Juvenile & Family Court Matters

May 15, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to recommend Patrick Comiskey to be the city manager of your community. I was a Commissioner in Cambridge, Maryland when we hired Patrick to be our city manager. At that time, our city had many challenges and a limited budget due to a long-time government structure without professional management. Cambridge, after a two- and one-half-year community effort, established a city council-city manager form of government in 2015. Patrick was our second city manager.

I retired from the city council before Patrick moved on to Mount Dora, Florida but was elected mayor here in September 2022. Patrick and his wife, Jane, are and were friends and both were fully engaged in our community during his time in Cambridge. We often discussed the multiple challenges that the city faced and that he faced as city manager in a community that was resistant to change.

Patrick's time here also had to confront the Covid-19 crisis and its unique challenges and the many new ways that had to be created to keep employees safe while seeing that the day-to-day work of running the city continued. Through all of those difficult days, Patrick used his experience and exceptional knowledge of good and fiscally balanced government to keep our city going and was able to adapt to the multiple issues that we faced.

I have learned from my experience as a commissioner and now as mayor that a city manager can face political challenges when there is a change of administration, none of the former elected officials who hired him are in the current administration, and none of the newly elected officials have previously held public office.

311 High Street • Cambridge, Maryland 21613 • Tel: 703-655-6149 • Fax: 410-228-0010
swrideout@aol.com

Patrick faced that situation here along with a workforce that was not used to the city manager form of government and wanted to go back to the old ways of city government. Patrick was caught in the middle of those challenges and worked with staff and the elected officials to ensure that Cambridge met its obligations both financially and to the community.

I hold Patrick in the highest regard for the hard work that he put into his time here and his mild-mannered way of doing business to help reduce conflict and address employee concerns equitably and honestly.

I believe that you will see from his experiences here and in Mount Dora that he is the kind of city manager that can help your city be well run and responsive to your community needs.

If you would wish to talk with my further regarding Patrick's application, my cell number is 703-655-6149.

Sincerely,



Stephen W. Rideout

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes

Patrick "Pat" Comiskey

Jim Faulkner – Former IT Director, City of Mount Dora, FL 325-875-6732

Mr. Faulkner met Mr. Comiskey in 2021 when he came to Mount Dora. Toward the end of his tenure Mr. Faulkner was acting as a Deputy City Manager, though he did not have the title.

Mr. Comiskey was a good supervisor, and he held people accountable. He managed the staff well. His hiring decisions were good. Because he was logical, he always considered what was in the City's best interest when making decisions.

An innovative manager, Mr. Comiskey had a creative way of solving problems that had never been thought of by previous managers. He was always out in the community. He had a dog and liked to walk around town. He was visible in the community. He had the support of the public and they responded very well to him. He was down to earth and genuinely cared about their issues.

Information flowed daily from Mr. Comiskey, and everyone knew what was happening. He saw the vision for the community or organization and gets there. His financial skills were excellent, he did far better than other City Managers.

The water treatment plant had an issue that involved the Department of Environmental Protection. He worked with employees on the utility side to resolve the issues. He was proactive and put monitors in while checking levels every day. He worked through the problems well, but it became political in the end. Mr. Comiskey was very calm in situations that would have been very upsetting to anyone else. He took a deep breath and worked through it. He brought the right people in to resolve it. He was one of the calmest individuals that Mr. Faulkner has ever known.

The political environment became so negative that Mr. Faulkner resigned. The Mayor had it out for Mr. Comiskey. Mr. Faulkner was not working for Mount Dora at this time and does not know the details. The Mayor, and the Directors Mr. Comiskey held accountable, may not speak as positive about him as Mr. Faulkner. The Directors did not like being asked to step up to the plate.

Mr. Comiskey was honest and had integrity. Because his character was without reproach, everyone was surprised when the Mayor and others came after him the way they did. The actions he was accused of are not in line with his character and Mr. Faulkner suggests that anyone looking at hiring Mr. Comiskey ignore the accusations. They were politically based, and not substance based.

Mr. Faulkner would hire Mr. Comiskey. In fact, Mr. Comiskey would be his first choice. Of the 20+ city or county managers that Mr. Faulkner has worked for, Mr. Comiskey is the best. He can manage any community of any size. He has integrity and does what he says he will do.

Reference Notes Patrick "Pat" Comiskey

Words or phrases used to describe Patrick Comiskey:

- Detailed,
- Responsible,
- Compassionate,
- Involved,
- Genuine, and
- Helpful.

Strengths: Really good with finance, can see what is happening before most and works through the issues well ahead of time.

Weaknesses: He is cautious and takes time making decisions at times.

Bob Gordon – Historical Preservation Board Member, Mount Dora, FL 352-360-3019

Mr. Gordon and some other like-minded citizens regularly attend Mount Dora Council meetings and speak up from time to time. After Mr. Comiskey was hired in 2021, Mr. Gordon became acquainted with Mr. Comiskey through these meetings.

Mr. Comiskey performed his job exceptionally well and did what he was hired to do. While they did not agree with everything that he did, they agreed with over 90% of his actions and applauded his efforts even when they did not agree. He did a great job. He asked staff to answer the questions from Council so they would be seen and receive credit for the work they did.

Visible at local events, Mr. Comiskey was a presence in the community. He took casual Saturday afternoon strolls, walked the parks, and spoke to the residents. He interacted well with everyone both out in the community and at Council meetings. He met with residents both privately and in groups. His door was always open, and everyone was welcome. If he was busy at that moment, he made an appointment with them. He was always gracious in his interactions with others.

When asked a question Mr. Comiskey could not answer, he either quickly found the answer or he had the appropriate staff member reach out. He was very responsive over text and email, as well.

The best way to describe Mr. Comiskey in stressful situations is very professional. When the issues started coming to a point Mr. Gordon and a handful of other people dug in and listened to every minute of the Council meeting to learn what was said by whom. They documented these comments and took them to the State Attorney's office. While they do not know all the details, it was clear to them that something was awry. Mr. Comiskey responded graciously by tendering a resignation and moving on. Nothing in his background would concern an employer.

Reference Notes

Patrick “Pat” Comiskey

Mr. Gordon would hire Mr. Comiskey without reservation, he did a great job. Some do not like being held accountable, or having to stick to the budget and resources they are given, and these individuals may not appreciate Mr. Comiskey. He held them accountable.

Mr. Comiskey is honest and forthright. He does what is best for the community despite his personal beliefs. He is a true gentleman and anyone who hires him will be more than pleased with his performance. He is viewed by many in the community as a good person and an excellent manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Patrick Comiskey:

- Great manager,
- Gives credit where it is due,
- Personable,
- Responsive,
- Professional, and
- Honest.

Strengths: Delegates, holds staff accountable, does not take all the credit, gives staff the opportunity to shine.

Weaknesses: When the first accusation was lodged against him, he was perhaps not vocal enough. That said, the issue came out of the blue and caught everyone by surprise. He had no warning that the Mayor was going to ask for his resignation.

Michael Starling – Former General Manager, Cambridge Radio Station, Cambridge, MD 410-415-3042

Mr. Starling has known Mr. Comiskey since 2018. They often met in the community and in work related capacities, and bumped into each other socially. They met when Mr. Comiskey came into the radio station to introduce himself to the Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods. The station has a big room that groups can reserve. Mr. Starling watched Mr. Comiskey and was very impressed with how thoughtful he was and how well he communicated with the group. Mr. Starling was reserved at first but quickly became a fan of Mr. Comiskey. Mr. Comiskey provided his phone number and was always good about returning calls even when he could not comment. He was also good about following up once he could share information. He is very professional.

Mr. Comiskey is a solid professional. He is more reserved than a political appointee, he does not commandeer the conversation. He is composed and thoughtful. He is very approachable and a great communicator. He made excellent decisions.

Reference Notes

Patrick "Pat" Comiskey

The County refused to run the election. Mr. Comiskey took ownership of this political hot potato, during the turmoil of the Covid-19 pandemic. He found a group in Maryland that had run many municipal elections and went through the process chapter and verse with them. He was brilliant in his handling of the election. They put the voting site downtown at the Chesapeake College satellite office because it was much closer to Wards 2 and 3 which are underrepresented. Citizens could vote by mail in or in person. He orchestrated the entire election, and they had by far the highest turnout that they have ever had, winding up with a new City Commission and Mayor. The votes between the candidates ranged between 2 and 6 votes in some wards.

Those who lost the election hired lawyers to challenge the results and the NAACP was involved. Mr. Comiskey laid out the process. The change in voting site was much more advantageous for the African American community, their voting numbers were higher than in any election in the past. The election was ratified. He never received the credit that he deserved for this achievement.

In the community Mr. Comiskey was out and about. He was very approachable and very accessible. He talked with constituents and stake holders for as long as they wanted to talk. He was very good natured.

Mr. Comiskey has a thorough grasp of the finances and was never challenged in any aspect of his budget. As a reporter, Mr. Starling watches the leadership when they are in the hot seat to see how they react. Mr. Comiskey never showed any discomfort. He paid close attention to the conversation, but he waited until asked to speak and then was calm and collected in his response.

Mr. Comiskey was unfairly criticized at the end of his tenure through a mishandled power play by the incoming administration who essentially made him the scape goat. Even so, several of the elected officials and the mayor had really nice things to say about him and what he did in Cambridge. He was a straight arrow and nothing in his background would concern a reasonable person. He played every hand he was dealt correctly.

Mr. Starling would hire Mr. Comiskey. In fact, he stepped down as General Manager from the radio station he founded and believes Mr. Comiskey would have done well replacing him. Mr. Comiskey has a great persona, and he comports himself well. He has the right demeanor for a public servant. Whoever hires him will be happy with their choice.

Words or phrases used to describe Patrick Comiskey:

- Good natured,
- Professional,
- Dependable,
- Approachable, and
- Solid.

Reference Notes

Patrick "Pat" Comiskey

Strengths: Communication, thoughtful, approachable.

Weaknesses: He is not gregarious and outgoing, so some misjudged him thinking he did not have much to offer. He has much to offer, he is just not gregarious.

Brian Roche – Commissioner, City of Cambridge, MD 443-205-0447

Mr. Roche has known Mr. Comiskey since 2018. Mr. Roche was on the Board of Directors for the Main Street Organization, and he was involved in the Eastern Shoreland Conservancy. They interacted in this capacity and when he needed resources or letters, Mr. Comiskey was always willing to support their efforts and send the right people to help. Mr. Roche ran for the Commission in 2020 and was elected. He took office in January 2021.

The entire Commission was newly elected, and Mr. Roche gained much respect for the responsibilities that city leadership has and of Mr. Comiskey. They are constantly bombarded with requests, even in a small town like Cambridge. In addition, the city manager form of government is new to Cambridge, he was only the second manager to serve the community. The Commission and the community are still trying to understand and embrace this form of government. Mr. Comiskey was a great resource because he was very likeable and always professional. He was always cool under pressure, which was a wonderful trait.

Cambridge is very resource constrained and Mr. Comiskey could have used a larger staff. They were particularly thin in the finance and public works departments. He served as the finance director when the position was vacant and recruited until he found a strong candidate. Even though it was his decision, he brought the candidate to the Council for their approval prior to making the employment offer. Their finance department received high marks, and everyone loved the individual he hired. He understood the need to find the right fit, particularly in government with public scrutiny. He was good at navigating the issues. He allowed department heads to make decisions for their areas. He did not always agree with who they hired, and unfortunately, he was ultimately responsible when it did not work out.

The former manager was never out in the community, and she did not respond to emails. Mr. Comiskey was quite the opposite. He moved right into the heart of the City and was a real joy and positive influence. He walked his dog around the city and was very visible.

Cambridge had a small budget and Mr. Comiskey managed it well. When Commissioners sprung projects and expenditures in public forums, he never balked. He worked as well as he could with them. He utilized grant money and shuffled money to meet obligations.

Mr. Comiskey embraced more progressive concepts and was energetic about them. They had many initiatives in process. Only a small percentage of constituents in their community supported ideas like storm water treatment. He worked with those who were not supportive to try and bring them along.

Reference Notes

Patrick "Pat" Comiskey

The redevelopment of an \$18 million dollar building was led by Mr. Comiskey, and he was tremendous in the process. He has engaged in facilitating necessary change. When an elected body wants to go in a particular direction, he will get them there.

While Mr. Comiskey did not have many resources to keep the community informed, he did the best he could with what they had. He put the word out on Facebook and sent emails and texts. He communicated well and completed every task he was given.

A Commissioner was found to not live in the ward she represented. Because of her heritage, some tried to turn it into a racial issue even though it was not. While the Commission was responsible for navigating the issue, they told her she had to live in her Ward, Mr. Comiskey helped facilitate the process and navigate the controversy. She later ran for Mayor because she realized she did not have to live in a particular ward to serve in that role.

During covid they needed to provide absentee ballots for the election. Mr. Comiskey navigated the process, brought in a professional firm, and adeptly handled this extremely touchy subject. He is skilled and established a professional process that the residents felt confident in. Nothing in his conduct would concern a reasonable person.

Mr. Roche would hire Mr. Comiskey and hated to lose him. Mr. Comiskey will thrive in a community that has accepted the City Manager form of government.

Words or phrases used to describe Patrick Comiskey:

- Personable,
- Collaborative,
- Accommodating,
- Progressive, and
- Energized by the positive.

Strengths: Helpful, supportive, professional, very likable, hires well, always cool under pressure, extremely visible in the community.

Weaknesses: Mr. Comiskey did not fail Cambridge, Cambridge failed Mr. Comiskey. The organization and elected body have not fully accepted the city manager form of government. He could have used his position to steam roll the departments, but instead he tried to collaborate and build compromise. His efforts are commendable but did not work in an organization so resistant to change.

Reference Notes

Patrick “Pat” Comiskey

Tom Puglisi – Secretary, Community Association of Neighborhoods, Cambridge, MD
240-418-2827

Mr. Puglisi has known Mr. Comiskey since 2018. They lived in the same neighborhood and knew each other well. Mr. Puglisi is the Secretary of the Neighborhood Association, and they interacted professionally in this capacity.

Mr. Comiskey was very even keeled and diplomatic when addressing the community. Commission members mentioned that one of his strengths was the proficient way he relayed information that they did not want to hear. He worked long hours, even through the weekend, and stayed on top of his responsibilities. He had a background in human resources and was good at managing departments and people. He held employees accountable. He made great decisions though they were not always supported for political reasons.

The former Manager was relatively new to the role and her organization of staff was inconsistent. Some directors were over extremely large areas while other directors had very little responsibility. Mr. Comiskey reorganized and realigned the staff so that the organization was more efficient, and responsibilities were more evenly spread.

The City Commission tried to micromanage the organization. Mr. Comiskey did well in this environment. Some Commission members were upset because they could no longer dictate who was hired or how the budget was developed. He tried to educate them about human resources, budgeting, and management in general which are areas of strengths for him.

Cambridge essentially has three community segments, an African American community that is divided within itself and has a history of racial tensions, the “from heres” whose families have lived in Cambridge for generations and the “come heres” who have lived in the city for decades in some cases but are still considered outsiders because their ancestors did not live in Cambridge. These division lines are very strong, in part, because the city was isolated from the state and county until 1950. In addition, the city and the county are very low income overall. Mr. Comiskey did as well as anyone could have. He tried to meet the interests of the entire community. He was not able to fill positions because funding was not available. The Commission was very averse to anything that might be seen as a tax increase, and they lowered the tax rate which left the city with less money than the prior year. Despite these challenges, the city ran more efficiently under Mr. Comiskey’s leadership.

Always at community events, Mr. Comiskey met with various groups in town and attended all city functions. He was very low key and liked to meet with the community in small groups to talk to residents. He ran the first election ever managed by the city. The former manager neglected to make arrangements with the County for the election, and they refused to run the election. Mr. Comiskey organized the election, hired a professional management company, and held a very efficient election. This election had the highest voter turnout in decades, even though it was not held in conjunction with the federal election and was on an entirely different day.

Reference Notes

Patrick “Pat” Comiskey

The only controversy related to disagreements between Mr. Comiskey and the Commission was over the retention of employees. Mr. Comiskey wanted to let some underperforming staff go but they had advocates on the Commission, and he was not allowed to. Other decisions were made behind closed doors and those decisions were always respected by Mr. Comiskey. He did his best to implement what the Commission decided, and he advocated for what was in the best interest of the city. Nothing in his conduct or background would concern a reasonable person.

Many residents do not like the City Manager form of government and they feel that the manager has too much power. In addition, the Commission wants to oversee personnel decisions. Their complaints are not specific to Mr. Comiskey, they are related to the form of government. The only person who may speak negatively of Mr. Comiskey is the department head that he wanted to let go but was not able to because the Commission intervened.

Mr. Puglisi would hire Mr. Comiskey, he is a great manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Patrick Comiskey:

- Great integrity and honesty,
- Cares about the people in the community,
- Communicates clearly,
- Tells elected officials what they do not want to hear,
- Attentive, and
- Good listener.

Strengths: Excellent manager, very even keeled, soft spoken and diplomatic but not afraid to identify problems and be frank in describing them, low key, kind, his concern for others is apparent.

Weaknesses: He is not interested in selling himself as a power broker or a force, which Mr. Puglisi appreciates but others may not.

Mark Lewis – Former Police Chief, Cambridge, MD 410-330-8294

Mr. Lewis has known Mr. Comiskey since 2018. Mr. Comiskey did a nice job and was very supportive of the police department and city operations. He was not a micromanager, which directors appreciate. When they brought issues to him, he worked through it with them, but he did not have his thumb on department heads all the time.

Departments hire their own staff and Mr. Lewis has a set process he uses. Mr. Comiskey was involved in the interview portion. Mr. Comiskey made good decisions both when hiring personnel and in general. He maintained operations at a high level of performance. He had good financial skills, and he met deadlines. He appeared to handle the stress well.

Reference Notes

Patrick “Pat” Comiskey

Visible in the community, Mr. Comiskey was at every event. He supported the ironman triathlon. He was out in the high crime areas during the National Night Out and participates in the PAL program. He was customer service oriented.

To stay informed Mr. Comiskey met with staff once a week before the pandemic. During the pandemic they stayed in regular contact through phone and email. He was a leader who rallies employees around the vision of the elected body.

Mr. Comiskey has not been involved in any controversy that might concern an employer. Mr. Lewis does not know why Mr. Comiskey decided to resign, but the Council was moving in another direction and was taking human resource responsibility away from the manager’s purview. Demoted employees may have a negative opinion of Mr. Comiskey, but he was by the book when it comes to managing an operation.

Mr. Lewis would hire Ms. Comiskey, he is an overall great person. Any employer can be confident in hiring him.

Words or phrases used to describe Patrick Comiskey:

- Trustworthy,
- Great person,
- Great personality,
- Great leader,
- Very professional,
- Family oriented,
- All around great person, and
- Very personable.

Strengths: Good leader, great listener, overall great manager.

Weaknesses: Some may prefer a manager to be more involved in the departments, but Mr. Lewis truly appreciates Mr. Comiskey’s hands off style.

Matt Pluta – Choptank Riverkeeper, ShoreRivers, Cambridge, MD 814-881-2165

Mr. Pluta has known Mr. Comiskey since 2018. Mr. Pluta is an environmental advocate who lives in Cambridge, and he really appreciated Mr. Comiskey’s personality. Mr. Comiskey was easy to talk to and get along with. His interest in the topic at hand was admirable. He showed up at every event and engaged with everyone.

The decisions that Mr. Comiskey made were aligned with what Mr. Pluta wanted to have happen in the city. The former city manager was not visible, but Mr. Comiskey was constantly out in the

Reference Notes

Patrick "Pat" Comiskey

community. He attended the trash cleanup on the weekends and is very community oriented. Residents admired his engagement. He was a role model for how to engage with a community.

Mr. Comiskey communicated as much as was expected and was appropriate. When someone else needed to be part of the conversation, he brought them to the table and made sure that everything was followed through on. He was connected to the issues.

Pollution was coming off the streets into rivers and the waterway. When the issue was brought to the City's attention, Mr. Comiskey took it upon himself to get funding, purchase new equipment and provide training for the staff. He identified and worked through the issue. Mr. Pluta's job is focused on protecting the river. Mr. Pluta worked for about four years before Mr. Comiskey was hired and he did not make any progress in his efforts to protect the river until Mr. Comiskey was hired. Mr. Comiskey saw the opportunity and kept at it.

City Council meetings were often stressful, but Mr. Comiskey was levelheaded. He did not overreact, he really listened and then responded appropriately. He made the constituents who come into City Hall feel important.

Cambridge has significant issues with racial disparity. Mr. Comiskey came into a town where discrimination is still very real but not in the traditional sense. The white population is the minority, but African Americans have a long history of being dealt a tough hand. The situation was very challenging, but he did the best that Mr. Pluta has ever seen. Mr. Comiskey made sure all areas of the City were given equal attention and services.

If Mr. Pluta were the Mayor, he would want Mr. Comiskey to be his Manager and was sad to see him leave. Mr. Comiskey is the best manager Mr. Pluta has seen.

Words or phrases used to describe Patrick Comiskey:

- Thoughtful,
- Levelheaded, and
- Passionate.

Strengths: Easy to talk to, easy to get along with, interested in the topic at hand, shows up, always present and engaged.

Weaknesses: He was dealt a tough hand and had good intentions but his reaction for trying to change what might be considered hard to change was a little slow. However, he was strapped with the limitations of his employment and the staff. Cambridge has a strong culture bias for people who were not born there. He brought out the best spirit in his work.

Reference Notes Patrick "Pat" Comiskey

Rusty Blackston – Former County Commission Chairman, Thomaston, GA 706-975-9598

Mr. Blackston has known Mr. Comiskey since about 2002. At the time, Mr. Comiskey was hired as their City Manager and Mr. Blackston was a County Commissioner and eventually became the Chairman. Mr. Comiskey is a fine, family man and professional through and through. When he sets his mind to something, he digs in and accomplishes it, no matter how long it may take. For example, it was not uncommon to see him working on projects in the office until 10 or 11 at night.

Mr. Blackston and Mr. Comiskey got along very well. Mr. Comiskey worked well with the elected city officials, but a division existed between city and county officials. He worked to heal the situation by working with and promoting the County. He also focused on obtaining grants to repair water and sewer issues. He worked successfully with the industrial development authority, and the recreation departments.

Mr. Comiskey was incredibly effective at managing the budget. He held department heads accountable when they proposed budgets to make sure money was being responsibly spent. He made decisions quickly if he was knowledgeable of the subject. If he was not, he did his research and then made a prompt and timely decision.

Mr. Comiskey has nothing controversial in his background and whoever ends up hiring him will be getting one of the best. Mr. Blackston would hire him in a heartbeat.

Words or phrases used to describe Patrick Comiskey:

- Dedicated,
- Determined,
- Devoted,
- Professional,
- Articulate, and
- Detail-oriented.

Strengths: He was determined. If he was on a project, he found a way to get it done, and made sure every t was crossed and i was dotted. When he passed you something and said it was good to go, you never had to worry that he missed something.

Weaknesses: He could have been a little friendlier, and willing to joke around a bit more.

Prepared by: Lynelle Klein
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/after-parting-ways-with-the-city-mount-dora-city-manager-speaks-out/ar-BB1iWDVk>

Microsoft Start
March 2024

After parting ways with the city, Mount Dora city manager speaks out

Author: Hayley Crombleholme

Less than a week after he and the city parted ways, we're hearing from the former Mount Dora City Manager for the first time. It's been months of testy council meetings as members discussed with each other neighbors and even heard from an outside law firm on how to move forward. The law firm interviewed city employees and listed concerns like the length of time city positions were left open and claims **Patrick Comiskey** missed meetings or could be hard to get ahold of. **Comiskey** shared his side of how things happened Monday. "When you push on the bureaucracy, it'll push back. And that's sort of what, we were sort of the victim of that here I think," **Comiskey** said. He says he came to Mount Dora in 2021 with years of experience as a city manager. "Fourth city as the city manager," he said of his position in Mount Dora.

He started work just one day before Mayor Crissy Stile was sworn in. "There was an election soon after we accepted the job here," he said. "So, we had a change in a couple positions. So naturally, you have a change in perspective, I guess. Change in objectives." By May of 2023, Mayor Stile made it clear she felt the city needed a change. "**Patrick**, I would like to offer you the opportunity to resign you position because I don't think you're at retirement age, and I do want to offer you that opportunity," Stile said in a city council meeting. "I decline," **Comiskey** responded.

The city ultimately hired a law firm to conduct an internal investigation into some of the claims made against **Comiskey**. They interviewed city employees, and concerns the firm listed in their conclusions and findings included how long it took to fill open positions and the fact that "numerous employees" mentioned "Mr. **Comiskey's** failure to attend scheduled meetings; falling asleep at meetings; or abruptly leaving meetings." It ultimately recommended termination. "There was no expectation of objectivity from that report," **Comiskey** said

Some spoke out against **Comiskey** after the report was released. "Since Mr. **Comiskey** became city manager In November of 2021, we have a disproportionate number of department heads and direct reports to the city manager resign," One resident said in a meeting.

But a number of people spoke in his favor. Including at the final meeting in which the city approved a resignation agreement. You have a city manager that you're sending out the door with his character defamed on what was previously an unblemished record, and you call that honorable? I think not." A resident said. **Comiskey** signed the agreement on Feb. 19. Parting ways about two and a half years into his five-year contract.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

"I was pretty much boxed in to either I was going to accept what they wanted to propose or I would have to go the litigation route, and I didn't want to do that route and I told my attorneys I didn't want to do that route. I wanted us to go ahead and just take the best we could get and move on," **Comiskey** said. He plans to stay in the same line of work. Just somewhere else.

"I think there's going to be mayors and councils out there that want a manager with a lot of experience that isn't afraid to make decisions that are not popular but need to be made," he said. "That's one of the things I've always been willing to do."

WESH reached out to the city of Mount Dora for comment. They declined at the advice of their attorney.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Daily Commercial (FL)
February 27, 2024

Mount Dora parts ways with its city manager

Author: Deb Hickok

The Mount Dora City Council voted 5-2 during its Feb. 20 meeting to accept the resignation of City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**. Council members John Cataldo and Dennis Dawson casted the dissenting votes. Lawyers from both sides negotiated the "voluntary agreement" between the manager and the city, which was signed beforehand by **Comiskey**. The settlement includes a severance package to **Comiskey** totaling nearly \$92,000 effective Feb. 26. Before then, he may revoke the agreement. The city also committed to paying **Comiskey's** legal fees. City Attorney **Patrick Brackins** said that a recommendation on how to move forward as quickly as possible in the selection of a new city manager could be presented at the next council meeting. The council's approval of the agreement culminated nine months of public debate regarding the employment of the manager. Prior to that, **Comiskey** received a positive review and a raise from the council in November 2022.

During a council meeting last May, Mayor Crissy Stile requested that an item be added to the agenda in order to address her concerns about the city manager. She started the discussion by asking **Comiskey** if he would offer to resign, which he declined. The mayor then listed issues with **Comiskey**, including disrespect for employees and poor decision making. During the subsequent four months spanning nearly 10 meetings, the city council grappled with several failed attempts to oust **Comiskey** as well as had on-going discussions regarding ways to proceed forward to resolve management issues.

The decision came on the heels of a council meeting one month ago when the same majority suspended the manager with pay and benefits. At that meeting, the council also appointed city Planning Director Vince Sandersfeld as acting city manager. These actions were taken after attorney Lindsay Greene, a labor specialist with Orlando-based DSK Law, submitted a 62-page report to the city in early January. The council hired Greene last August to address an employee's charges against **Comiskey** under Florida's Whistle-blower Act. The \$156,000 investigation included 1,800 pages of record and testimony from 20 current and former city employees. The report concluded that **Comiskey's** conduct was not in violation of the whistleblower act or federal and state civil rights acts. In the report's summary, Greene recommended the termination of **Comiskey** based on her determination that his conduct was in violation of multiple city policies.

Prior to Monday's vote, Cataldo sought a resolution by the council other than accepting the resignation. He stated that initially the council voted 6-1 — and they voted five separate times altogether — to not dismiss the city manager. Cataldo also said that processes the council had requested were not followed, such as a "360 review process" and the hiring of a "conflict resolutionist." "So, I am wondering between all of us, do you really feel content in the process of

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

accepting the resignation?" asked Cataldo. "Or do you think that there is room to resolve this? And is this the right way to resolve this conflict?"

"This was not handled in the best way," said Dawson as he agreed with Cataldo. He estimated that the city spent \$500,000 on the situation. Dawson recommended that the council put "serious performance metrics in place" no matter who was the city manager going forward. Cataldo's suggestion to pursue another path did not gain traction with the council.

"We now have an agreement that **Mr. Comiskey** has agreed to under oath to resolve it," said council member Cal Rolfson in speaking in favor of approving the agreement. "And it's honorable for him. It's honorable for us." Rolfson mused that the alternative might be to terminate **Comiskey** for cause as one of the options because "if you look at the 62-page report, there's more than enough cause, in my opinion, to do so." "And now, at this late date, to deflect further makes no sense to me at all.," he added later in his remarks.

Citizens voiced support for the manager. "I beg to differ with you, sir," said local resident Charlie Sanz as she directed comments to Rolfson during the public comment period of the meeting. "He (**Comiskey**) did not do this by choice. He was given a choice, basically by blackmail." Sanz interpreted **Comiskey's** alternatives as either he signs the agreement or faces getting fired without remuneration. "That's not the fair way to do this," she said. "Mayor, before you move on to additional public comment, when the city is accused of blackmailing somebody, it's my job to speak up," interjected Brackins. He cited a Florida statute that sets the legal limits that a city is allowed to pay to resolve an employment dispute with one of its employees. "**Mr. Comiskey** is receiving the full benefits that are allowed under Florida law," said Brackins. "Under no circumstance is he being blackmailed. This agreement was negotiated with his counsel and myself over many weeks in good faith."

"This is not about deflection, this is about reflection," said Joe Lewis, owner of a Mount Dora-based business, during the comment period also in response to Rolfson. "Reflection on the council's actions in the past ten months that brought us here."

Conspicuously absent from the audience was the group of employees who sat together at a council meeting a month ago. "I come to you out of great concern for our employees," said Tara Halcomb, a Mount Dora resident since 1990 and a 16-year city employee, during public comments on Jan. 22. "Since **Mr. Comiskey** became city manager in November of 2021, we've had a disproportionate number of department heads and direct reports to the city manager resign," said Holcomb, who then named 10 employees who resigned. Her comments received applause from the employee contingent.

Earlier during public comments, resident Jay Smith said, "If we are indeed in the position to search again for a city manager, I would hope that you would lay a clear, achievable plan that he or she could be evaluated against." Smith also chastised the city for allowing "the mayor and the city council to overstep their authority and cut the legs out from under the city manager by

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

inserting themselves — the mayor in particular — into the operational and administrative issues in this city." "I wish you good luck in finding a candidate," ended Smith.

During Monday night's public comment period, resident Bob Gordon referred to a letter dated Feb. 19 that was circulated to the council. "It presents to you a viable way to work this situation out in an honorable, in a fair, and in a reasonable method," said Gordon. The letter was signed by 21 people who were identified as "We the Citizens of Mount Dora." They suggested 12 provisions to be implemented during a year's period. Their recommendations were designed to give **Comiskey** "the opportunity to once again prove himself and reestablish himself as an effective leader." "Those allegations are merely the opinions of Ms. Greene and each of those claims have been clarified, explained, explicated and dispelled in **Mr. Comiskey's** letter of rebuttal," said the group. They were referring to a 10-page letter with 11 exhibits dated Jan. 22 that was circulated by **Comiskey** to refute the DSK Law report written by Greene. "Instead of **Mr. Comiskey's** name, insert the words 'city manager' and those 12 provisos would still apply," said Gordon in a subsequent interview on the Thursday after the council vote. A 27-year resident of Mount Dora, Gordon drafted the letter, coordinated its review, and gathered the signatures.

In concurrence with other citizen and Dawson's remarks during the meeting, Gordon said that the new city manager should meet with the council to identify a set of performance goals. "What is important today may not be the most important issue for tomorrow, so (they) need to periodically review the goals and objectives during the year," he advised. "The city manager should do the same with his reports," he said. "It kind of rolls downhill." "There's been a lot of interference by the mayor and other council members that is clearly in violation of the charter," said Gordon. "The mayor and the council members should refrain from interfering in the day-to-day operations. That is not their role." "**Patrick** came to me and others to thank us for our support," recounted Gordon. "I am not doing this for you, I am doing this for us, the citizens of Mount Dora," he replied to **Comiskey**.

The city manager relays a statement after council's decision. "I was hired as a change agent with the task of finding ways to improve city operations, counter the spiraling growth of city government, and offer some stability with the revolving door of managers here," said **Comiskey** in a statement emailed on Feb. 21. "No one is ever happy with the guy who has to make cuts," he wrote. "And change is hard to accept sometimes."

Comiskey had previously prepared a document in which he detailed nearly \$19 million in savings and cost avoidance since becoming city manager in late 2021. "The bureaucracy here fought back to the point where my position became untenable," continued **Comiskey**. "In spite of this, we were able to achieve many objectives and positioned the city for future successes while saving the city taxpayers millions of dollars." He expressed his and his family's love for Mount Dora. He also conveyed appreciation for the support from "civic and business leaders and citizens in the community who are appreciative of the progress we accomplished."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/mount-dora-city-manager-suspended-notified-of-intent-to-remove-him/ar-BB1h6BfV>

Microsoft Start
Around January 2023

Mount Dora city manager suspended, notified of intent to remove him

Author: Hayley Crombleholme

The Mount Dora City Council is suspending their city manager with pay and notified him of their intent to remove him. It happened in a Monday special council meeting to consider a report from a law firm hired to conduct an internal investigation of allegations against city manager **Patrick Comiskey**.

The lawyer who put together the report after interviewing more than a dozen current and former city employees recommended terminating both the city manager and his executive assistant. The lawyer was asked to investigate a whistleblower complaint from an employee that had been directed by the city council to initiate a survey into **Comiskey's** management. That employee had expressed concerns about being retaliated against for conducting the survey. The lawyer found that this employee's "conduct in facilitating and overseeing in internal survey of the City Manager's direct reports" did not fall under activities protected by the Whistleblower Act. The lawyer also found **Comiskey** did not violate the Civil Rights Act or the Florida Civil Rights Act for unlawful retaliation.

A number of people took issue with the investigation and defended City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** Monday night. "The report and the summary in particular were extremely biased," said one city resident. "If Mr. **Comiskey** and Ms. Lovern are removed, I don't know how we can possibly expect to find anyone of worth to work in this town with all of the drama, discord, suspicion and rumors that have been spread."

But at least one city resident supported the report's findings. "Since Mr. **Comiskey** became city manager In November of 2021, we have a disproportionate number of department heads and direct reports to the city manager resign," the resident said. "We will continue to lose dedicated employees and leaders if we ignore the honesty and vulnerability that our staff have displayed in this report."

DSK Law was hired to perform an internal investigation of allegations concerning the city manager. Some of the concerns the firm listed in their conclusions and findings included how long it took to fill open positions and the fact that "numerous employees" mentioned "Mr. **Comiskey's** failure to attend scheduled meetings; falling asleep at meetings; or abruptly leaving meetings." It also listed concerns with his supervision of his executive assistant, whose termination the report also recommended. However, the city council does not have the authority to terminate his executive assistant.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WESH reached out to **Comiskey** and his executive assistant for comment. His assistant shared a letter **Comiskey** sent to Councilmembers Monday. In it, he called out the report for taking months to put together at a cost of more than \$150,000 dollars to the city. "One could easily surmise from this year-long circus and resulting report, there has been an obvious and concerted effort by a handful of people with the intent to prevent me from doing my job, ruin my professional reputation, and create a false narrative in support of the termination of my employment," he said. He said allegations he played favorites was simply not true, said information was left out in claims he took too long to fill open positions, and said he strongly denies that he ever slept during a meeting.

The council ultimately voted to adopt the report's findings. "To notify the city manager orally and have the city attorney notify the city manager in writing of our intent to remove the city manager under section 21 of the charter based on the reports findings, credibility, determinations, conclusions and recommendations," Council member Doug Bryant said in his motion.

Mr. **Comiskey** had the right to request a due process or name-clearing hearing, which he did. That will be held Feb. 12. Another vote will need to be taken by the council in another meeting to remove **Comiskey** or not.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Daily Commercial (FL)
October 2023

At City Hall, Mount Dora brings drama

Author: Deb Hickok

The Mount Dora City Council unanimously appointed Andrew Hand and Patrick Brackins of the Maitland-based law firm of Shepard, Smith, Kohlmyer & Hand, P.A., as the new city attorneys during its Sept. 21 meeting. The selection came about two months after city attorney Sherry Sutphen of Orlando-based Roper, P.A. submitted her resignation to council members.

In a letter dated July 19, Sutphen pointed out the deterioration of the relationship with the city manager, **Patrick Comiskey**. There are only two positions – the manager and the attorney – that the city council directly hires, both through contractual engagements. "While the City is designed to operate with a checks and balances system that enables the City Council to base its decisions on the separate but equal functions of the City Manager and City Attorney," wrote Sutphen, "of late, the City Manager has taken overt steps to hinder and circumvent my role as City Attorney in this fundamental process." "Specifically, my legal opinion has been undermined, second-guessed, and outright ignored by the City Manager," lamented Sutphen. Citing the risk of liability for her firm because "my review has been ignored or passed over," she decided to tender her resignation. She urged in the letter that the council be expedient to find a replacement but offered to remain as legal counsel to the city until that time. Sutphen was named the city's interim city attorney in August 2018 after the city terminated its previous legal counsel. Through a unanimous vote, her contract was finalized the following January. She continued to function as its attorney until the city's appointment of Hand and Brackin. Sutphen will continue to work with the city to update the new firm during the transition.

Also during the Sept. 21 meeting, the mayor, council and manager debated the merits of the process in selecting the firm. A Letter of Interest went out for bid on Aug. 13 for 18 days with two law firms responding, according to the mayor. Stile asserted that the process would typically take two to three months, including steps such as interviews of potential firms by the council. One of the firms withdrew.

Vice Mayor Marc Crail defended the process, saying that it followed what the council agreed to at its Aug. 1 meeting. While council member Cal Rolfson praised the qualifications of the new firm, he was frustrated with the process. "We abandoned our rights to do it the way it should be done," he said.

Council member Doug Bryant voiced that the conversation about the process did not apply to the agenda action item of retaining a new city attorney firm that evening, but rather it may provide guidance for the future. "Has our process has been a little bit disjointed at times? Has it been maybe a little bit acrimonious at times?" asked Bryant rhetorically. "Yes, and yes." But he said that he did not have a problem with the way the solicitations for the firm were conducted. "I am

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

particularly happy with the yield of the solicitations," he said in approval of the hiring of the new firm.

Four months of discussion to date about the city manager Social media conversations have referred to the city as "Mount Drama," as it has publicly grappled with controversial issues during the past couple of years. Under debate have been topics such as the Joint Planning Agreement with Lake County, land development proposals and, most recently, a focus on personnel matters.

During the past four months, spanning nearly 10 meetings, the city council has grappled with several failed attempts to oust **Comiskey** as well as had ongoing debates regarding ways to proceed forward to resolve management issues. Beginning during the May 16 council meeting, Mayor Crissy Stile requested that an item be added to the agenda in order to address concerns about the city manager. Stile started the discussion on the new item by asking **Comiskey** if he would offer to resign, which he declined. Stile said in the meeting video that she was about to have "probably the most uncomfortable discussion that I have ever had in my life." She mentioned that she was compelled to have it in public, citing Florida's Sunshine Law – also known as the "open meetings" law.

Stile then spent 30 minutes detailing complaints about the manager, which included personnel and decision making issues. Stile stated that, since **Comiskey** was hired nearly two years ago, 98 people left employment with the city and noted that 54 of those left without stating a reason for their departure. "I am talking about disrespect for our employees, I am talking about uninformed decisions, poor decisions," said Stile about **Comiskey**. "I'm talking about not being engaged with what is happening within this city, and all-around unprofessional nature of our city manager."

Council members' comments in response indicated that they were unwilling to make a move to terminate the manager that evening. Some praised the manager's work performance. They then sought to establish a process to mediate the situation and garner employee comments. The council then voted unanimously to delegate council member John Cataldo to contact the Florida League of Cities for assistance. At the May 22 meeting, Cataldo reported to the council that the league recommended three executive professionals consultants who deal with conflict resolution. Council member Dennis Dawson was tasked to work with the city's human resources department to create a survey to assess sentiment about the city manager from those employees who report directly to him.

"I serve at the will and pleasure of the mayor and council," said **Comiskey** during his report toward the end of the meeting. He remarked that he thought he had the support of the council, but knew he lost the mayor's support the previous October. "But as I told her, I pledged to work with her and I want to work with everybody," he added.

At the June 6 council meeting, Stile asked again to add an item about the manager to the agenda. "In my opinion, things have gotten worse," she said. "I lack confidence in our city manager." The mayor motioned to terminate the manager's contract and requested the appointment of an interim

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

manager. Council member Nate Walker seconded the motion "for the purpose of discussion." The motion failed, with only Stile voting in favor. Stile called an emergency special meeting of the council for June 15 to discuss the more than 60-page report prepared by the city's HR department that was the result of the employee survey. Bryant conveyed that he received an email with the report at 4 p.m. which he saw at 5:30 p.m., just 90 minutes before the meeting. "I think that we've had a calm, cautious approach to this whole matter," he said. "At this point in time, this strikes me that this is grossly premature. I don't know why we are here this evening." "I don't know why we are having a meeting here tonight," echoed Cataldo. "The sky is not falling."

"**Patrick** is unresponsive and evasive to phone calls," quoted Stile from employee's comments about the manager in the report. "Good luck getting him on the phone." "He doesn't show enough respect to his employees or directors to respond back." "Working for the city of Mount Dora has not been pleasant." Walker reiterated the council's desire to bring in an outside firm to address the conflicts. "This is messy," he said. "We have to right this ship." He added that he would not decide on the manager until he had adequate time to review the report. The council postponed further discussion to the next meeting. Fifteen days later, at the June 20 city council meeting, an agenda item was listed as "City Manager Conclusion." **Comiskey** conveyed his desire to reach closure on this issue. "In summary from my position, I've had an attack made against my name, my reputation in an effort to take away my livelihood and my career," he stated.

Council members discussed their thoughts on the report distributed before their last meeting. "It's sad to say that we need to take responsibility for what has transpired," reflected Cataldo. "I think it's a sad state of affairs of what we've caused. We've disrupted our community." "We have opened employees, endangered their credibility," he added. "What it showed to me is that there is room for improvement – particularly in communication," said Bryant.

The conversation concluded with the council authorizing Dawson to create a scope of work, and through the city procurement process, to contact consultants to "assist the city in moving forward for conflict resolution and personal growth for employees and council." Stile was the dissenting vote. The council was subsequently informed that the date for response to a Request for Qualification for such a firm was mid-August. Two items regarding hiring legal counsel for employee relations and claims were tabled to the next meeting.

At the Aug. 1 meeting, the council unanimously agreed to hire attorney Lindsay Greene to address investigating an employee's complaints against the city manager. Stile remarked that the council should consider suspending **Comiskey** in light of the fact that the employee who filed a whistleblower complaint had been relieved of some duties, while the city manager remained in his position.

Rolfson made statements in support of the mayor's concerns. He noted that he had expressed consistent support of the city manager until staff members came to him to express frustration with the **Comiskey**. Rolfson listed more than 10 items to exemplify the characterization of a "toxic work environment" made by an employee. Rolfson made a motion to suspend the manager with full pay and benefits until a full investigation was completed. The motion failed 3-4, with

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Rolfson, Stile and Walker voting for it while Cataldo, Dawson, Bryant and Crail were against. Debate continued as the city manager put forward the name of an interim city attorney, Daniel Mantzaris of Orlando-based DSK – de Beaubien, Simmons, Knight, Mantzaris & Neal – law firm. "I heard some things tonight that I was frankly not aware of," said Mantzaris when addressing the council.

Mantzaris advised that, if Sutphen was willing to continue in her role as city attorney until a permanent replacement was named, then that "may be the best course of action for the city of Mount Dora." "Even though we understand the issues...it will take us a good amount of time to get up to speed with the history," he said. He referred to the rarity of hiring an interim attorney unless it was an emergency. Crail looked to Sutphen to ascertain her willingness to remain. "I would absolutely be willing to stay six months, a year, or whatever it takes," confirmed Sutphen. "It is absolutely heartbreaking to me that the disrespect (of the city manager) is allowed to continue," she said.

Sutphen proffered a caveat to continuing as the city's attorney. She requested a point person in the city – other than the city manager – that she could work with to proceed forward. "**Mr. Comiskey** has proven that he will not work with me," she said. "He doesn't tell the truth sitting up here, and it puts me in a very uncomfortable position."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Daily Commercial (FL)
February 20, 2023

Proposed ‘intense’ multi-use project in Mount Dora

Author: Deb Hickok

"We're just the first applicant coming into Wolf Branch, so I think there's a shock factor," said Aaron Hakim, president of Apopka-based AMCO Development and property owner. Hakim was referring to public debate surrounding a multi-use development proposal to be in the City of Mount Dora more than two miles from the downtown core. "What I truly feel has been lost is all the wide range of economic benefits including increased economic vitality, job growth and community connectivity," said Hakim. He said that the proposed project, comprising nearly 40 acres, is estimated to cost \$1.6 billion for construction in two phases over a 15-year period. Hakim is also under contract to purchase two adjacent properties totaling 42 acres in unincorporated Mount Dora.

AMCO's revised master plan includes offices totaling 900,000 square feet, 325 hotel rooms and a 100,000-square-foot convention center, 1,530 apartment and condo units, a 275-unit senior-living facility, mini-storage, retail and commercial spaces, and an underground parking garage providing 95% of the required on-site parking. The proposed development borders State Road 46 to its north and Buttercup Lane on the east. Railroad tracks run south of the property. The Orange County border is nearby. Vince Sandersfeld, director of the city's Planning and Development Department, previously described the project as an "intense development" and a "monumental project that the city has never seen." AMCO first began conversations with staff in 2018, according to Hakim. For the past year, the Mount Dora planning staff has worked with the developer on the specific proposal. The Mount Dora City Council unanimously approved the annexation of the property in mid-August as the first step to clear the way for the venture. Hakim noted that he appeared before the city council at a public work session 1 1/2 years prior to annexation.

The council is scheduled to vote on this next phase of the project – the Planned Unit Development, or PUD – during its Feb. 21 meeting. Originally, the city's Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval to the council with eight conditions, which the city planning staff determined have been met. In a memo to the council, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** wrote that planning commission members "expressed overall concerns and issues with the density, intensity, schools, and vision of the Wolf Branch Innovation District." **Comiskey** also noted that "capacity for water, wastewater, and reclaimed is a concern for the full build-out scenario; therefore, no site plan approvals can occur until such time the City has sufficient utility capacity."

If the council approves the PUD on Feb. 21, a site plan will be required. Detailed in the city's Land Development Code, a site plan includes items such as the size and location of structures, parking areas, setbacks, source of utilities, landscaping, architectural design, tree protection plan, and storm-water management concept. AMCO's PUD plan has already included some of these

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PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

items. "We have been ultra-accommodating in finding a way forward to make this work through clear and transparent means of addressing community and council concerns," said Hakim. "And we are committed to do so," he said. "We have never once dug our heels and said, 'That's it.' " "We looked at ways to improve accessibility downtown and not detract from it," said Hakim. "Although we have a Mount Dora address, we're in a completely different district: the Wolf Branch Innovation District." The 850-acre Wolf Branch district surrounding the interchange of State Roads 46 and 453 was collaboratively designed by the city and Lake County during a nearly 20-year process. Both entities approved its implementation plan in 2019. The district was intended to prepare for future growth by diversifying the economic base of the region. The governments looked to take advantage of new regional transportation linkages designed to create greater accessibility to Orlando and Sanford.

The highway plans included construction of the now-completed Wekiva Parkway and the widening of SR 46. The latter "will have a profound effect on the character and purpose of the eastern portions of the City," stated the city's June 2020 "Vision Update & EAR Report," which served as an update to its comprehensive plan. A key element of Wolf Branch is an employment center intended "to create jobs and educational facilities within the community, thus providing opportunities to retain local workforce in proximity to housing," according to the city's website. "The main factor is the job creation in targeted high-wage job growth," said Hakim. "We asked, 'How do we catalyze that growth?'" "All of these uses provide the necessary elements that would be required to secure those types of positions in the Wolf Branch that complement its live-work-play goal," he added. Hakim cited that high-wage positions produced would include professional, scientific and technical services, financial services, research and development, information technology, corporate headquarters, software distribution, medical and educational.

An economic analysis – expected to be released by AMCO on Feb. 21 – estimates that the project will produce 14,000 annual jobs in a stabilized year after construction. And it is anticipated to generate annual revenue from employment of more than \$2.4 billion, according to Hakim. Hakim asserts that the project is "hugely sustainable and environmentally friendly." He noted that green roofs have recently been inserted into the plan. "This design in this development has a focus on a quality of life – wellness and health – to create a dynamic walkable environment," he described. A key issue is concern with the maximum building height, as reflected in public comments from staff, city leaders and citizens in the past few months. The Wolf Branch design standards limit the height to 100 feet. A height change requires approval to rezone by the council. Building A was originally put forward by AMCO with a 350-foot height. It was then reduced to 310 feet. The plan in front of the council on Feb. 21 further downsizes the building to 250 feet, which equates to 14 stories tall. Hakim described the building as "a vertically mixed-use building with commercial, educational, R&D, and specialty office."

"The only reason that we came into the PUD process versus the straight Wolf Branch zoning was because we recognized that this development would need the flexibility of design in height requirement," said Hakim. "Every other aspect of our development aligns with the Wolf Branch designs and goals." Hakim asserted that the mix of uses makes the project work for job creation, which is taken into consideration when reducing building heights. "If I tried to drop any one of

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

these uses, it wouldn't work," he said. "So, we had to find a really creative way to relocate (uses)," he said. "One of the ways we did that is by sinking the building 20 feet into the ground – one floor has been sunken to enter on the second story."

AMCO previously provided to the city a visual impact rendering that showed the 350-foot Building A from a SR 46 vantage point. "Obviously 100 feet of building height has been removed for the resubmittal, and if this rendering were to be revised, the top of the building would be just above the tree lines," said Hakim in a follow-up email. **Comiskey's** memo refers to the topography change on the property by noting that "there are existing conditions of the site which appear to provide justification for building height adjustments with the slope of the land from SR 46 to the railroad (north to south) ranging from 55 feet to 60 feet."

"In addition, the job creation associated with professional offices is consistent with the overall purpose of the Employment Center of the WBID," the memo said. An outspoken critic of the project, Josh Hemingway, said "absolutely not" to the 250-foot revision. Hemingway recently attended a presentation on the Wolf Branch district to the city's zoning commission. He said that the presenter, Blake Drury of GAI Consultants, "reaffirmed what most of us have been stating – that a lot of work was put into full design of the innovation district." "He gave examples of the height very clearly that they used as reference to keep it in keeping with Mount Dora," Hemingway added.

Social media posts have popped up about the project and are generating discussion. A post by Jay Smith of North Mount Dora on NextDoor against the project has generated more than 170 back-and-forth comments that were both pro and con. "Go live in Orlando if that is the life you want. DON'T ORLANDO MY MOUNT DORA," wrote Smith in one retort. A Northeast Mount Dora resident, Una Fox, posted on the same site to protest the plan, producing nearly 60 comments. "It's not that I am against businesses. It's what they're planning there with the architectural design is not in keeping with Mount Dora," said Fox in an interview for this article. "We're not a bunch of antiquated people that don't want Mount Dora to grow," she said. "We don't want the city to lose its flavor or character."

Sorrento resident Jessica Simmons started an online petition on Facebook to gather support against the proposed development. Created on Jan. 22, the link has been shared on other social media sites such as Instagram and NextDoor. As of Feb. 15, the petition had 2,040 signers. "Some of these buildings are massive and just don't fit with our small-town feel," Simpson said. Concerned about the possible influx of people and empty office buildings, she said that "I know progression isn't going to be stopped but they need to scale back." Hakim said that AMCO has been monitoring social media sites. "We have not brushed anyone aside," he said. "We have not taken their concerns lightly." "For a select group of people who want to turn this into a circus, I would encourage them to reach out directly to the applicant and ask them any questions that they may have," said Hakim. In the ongoing discussion since the city's annexation of the land last August, more than 20 people testified against the proposed project during the public comment period at a city council meeting earlier this month. The lone voice that spoke in favor was Mount Dora business owner Joe Lewis, who started by saying, "I got a feeling that I'm not going to get

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

applause." "What I saw was a developer that was willing to work with the city," he said. "We should have learned a lot from Simpson Grove – we are not the only governing body in the Lake County." Lewis was referring to Mount Dora Groves, a proposed mixed-use project outside the city limit owned by Simpson Family Partnership LTD. It was debated last year. The Groves representative originally submitted applications, including one for annexation, through the city. The proposal drew fire from some area residents as well as reluctance from a few council members. The applicant withdrew the requests to the city in January and instead chose to move through the Lake County process. The county approved the rezoning last October. Construction is expected to begin this year. The combined project north and south of U.S. 441 covers nearly 225 acres and features 1,055 residential units plus commercial space.

Tensions arose between the two governments regarding process and design standards as the Groves project moved forward in the county. At the core of the disagreement was interpretation of the Joint Planning Agreement. The JPA addresses unincorporated areas adjacent to Mount Dora that are potential parcels for annexation. First signed in 2004 and amended in 2015, the JPA outlines cooperation between the two governments to facilitate "sound growth management." During the faceoff, both parties agreed that the JPA should be updated and clarified. Meanwhile, Lake County Commissioner Sean Parks is spearheading a Joint Planning Work Group with Municipalities to pursue JPAs with each city as well as update Mount Dora's and the few other existing agreements. Known for large master-planned communities, California-based Richland Communities purchased 550 acres in the Wolf Branch district for a total of \$24.8 million last December, as recently reported by the GrowthSpotter. A few new or expanded residential developments are also in the works in the area. City planning staff reported that they fielded numerous inquiries from developers about the district.

Hakim said that other developers have reached out to him. "Everyone in our arena is watching this transpire," he said. "If it isn't approved, they won't process their application through the city." "The growth is going to come here," said Hakim. "With access to the highway system, this development from Orange County has been planned for 15 to 20 years." "I have confidence that the city council members will do their civic duty and do their fiduciary responsibility to analyze everything out in front of them by the staff and the developer," said Hakim. "And do what's best for Mount Dora as a whole." City of Mount Dora officials declined to be interviewed for this article.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://insidelake.com/2022/11/30/former-police-chief-files-lawsuit-against-mount-dora-alleging-whistleblower-violation-says-he-was-ordered-to-stop-internal-affairs-investigations/#google_vignette

Inside Scoop, Mount Dora
November 30, 2022

Former Police Chief Files Lawsuit Against Mount Dora Alleging Whistleblower Violation, Says He was Ordered to Stop Internal Affairs Investigations

Author: Marilyn M. Aciego

The former chief of Mount Dora Police Department has filed a lawsuit against the City of Mount Dora. James “Brett” Meade, filed the suit in Lake County Circuit Court late Monday afternoon, alleging a violation of the Florida Public Whistleblowers Act. Meade was named the city’s interim police chief in July 2020 after former Chief Robert Bell abruptly retired following the firing of former Deputy Chief Michael Fewless. Fewless was fired after having a conversation with this reporter, and this reporter broke the story of his firing. Fewless sued, also alleging whistleblower violations and the city settled with him for more than \$250,000. Mount Dora has had four police chiefs in just three years. John O’Grady was fired in 2019 after an investigation into misconduct involving a statement he allegedly made to an officer. He later sued and reached a settlement agreement that paid him more than \$60,000. Bell was named chief following O’Grady’s firing and served less than a year before retiring after Fewless was fired. Bell faced allegations of a hostile work environment and favoring a female subordinate—the same officer who made the accusations against O’Grady— including having a relationship with her. During a deposition in the Fewless case, Bell admitted to the relationship though he “vehemently” denied it while he was chief, Fewless said in his deposition. Meade was named interim chief by former City Manager Robin Hayes following Bell’s abrupt retirement. Meade, along with former Deputy Chief Al Rollins were hired in part to assess the department. “Chief Meade was tasked with serving the Mount Dora Police Department as their Interim Chief of Police and to conduct a comprehensive department assessment, which included surveys from officers and staff as well as the public,” a press release from the City of Mount Dora stated when Meade was named permanent chief in June 2021. Hayes left the city nine months after the appointments of Meade and Rollins, in April 2021, when she and the city “agreed to part ways.” Rollins retired after a little more than a year and Capt. Michael Gibson was then named deputy chief; Gibson was later named interim chief after Meade’s separation from the city and holds that position today.

In Meade’s suit, he states he initiated two internal affairs investigations for excessive force by a Mount Dora Police officer on Feb. 15; less than a month later he learned that Human Resources Director Sharon Kraynick asked the Lake County Sheriff’s Office to take over the internal affairs investigation and to investigate Meade. Meade spoke with Kraynick and City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** by phone and informed them it was his responsibility to conduct the investigation and according to the Florida Law Enforcement Officer’s Bill of Rights, an outside agency cannot conduct departmental internal affairs investigations. The following week, Meade sent an email to **Comiskey** and provided him a copy of the state statute. “Mr. **Comiskey** nonetheless insisted

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Meade continue the City’s efforts to have the investigation conducted by an outside law enforcement agency,” the complaint states. Meade then contacted seven different law enforcement agencies and they all declined to conduct the investigation. On April 5, Meade sent a written memo to **Comiskey** informed him no other agency would conduct the investigation and asked for permission to move forward with the current internal investigation. **Comiskey** never responded and Meade resumed his investigation, according to the suit. On May 9, another video of a Mount Dora Police officer using excessive force was released, and in an interview with an Orlando media outlet, Meade said an internal investigation would be conducted; two days later **Comiskey** emailed Meade and said it was imperative the investigation be conducted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE.) Later that day Meade and Gibson, who is now the department’s interim chief, met with **Comiskey** and again explained the investigation could not be conducted by an outside agency. **Comiskey** is alleged to have said he was being advised “differently” but would not say where he was getting his information. In mid-May, **Comiskey** contacted the FDLE commissioner and requested FDLE conduct the investigation; **Comiskey** was referred to a special agent who told him FDLE conducts criminal investigations, not internal administrative investigations.

On May 19, **Comiskey** emailed Meade and said he was securing an outside agency to conduct the investigation and Meade again cited Florida law and requested a meeting with the undisclosed person advising **Comiskey**. On May 31, Meade sent yet another email advising **Comiskey** of his authority and his intent to proceed with the latest investigation into use of force, in addition to a Florida Attorney General opinion regarding city manager involvement in police internal investigations. Meade followed up with a meeting with **Comiskey** and Kraynick and **Comiskey** ordered the investigation be stopped. Meade told the pair they were interfering with his duties, and they would have to fire him to stop him from carrying out his lawful duty. The same night, outside of business hours, at around 7:45 p.m., **Comiskey** emailed Meade and ordered him to cease his investigation and if he disregarded the order, he would be subject to termination. The following day, on June 1, **Comiskey** sent Meade another email “threatening that if Meade failed to follow his demand, he would be subject to disciplinary action including probable termination,” the complaint states. Meade was given two options, either allow the city to violate the law by circumventing his responsibility to conduct internal investigations or be terminated. “As Meade had sworn to uphold the law, the only action he or any reasonable employee could have taken in that situation was to involuntarily resign in order to escape illegal employment requirements. The involuntary resignation on June 1, 2022, amounts to a constructive discharge in retaliation for engaging on protected activity in violation of Florida’s Public Whistleblowers Act,” the complaint states. At a city council meeting following Meade’s involuntary resignation, numerous residents and business owners spoke in support of Meade and expressed their displeasure in his departure. A chaplain for the police and fire department likened his leaving to losing a parent. Meade, who earned \$130,000 annually as chief, is seeking more than \$30,000 in damages and is represented by Richard W. Smith of NeJame Law in Orlando.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2022/06/08/many-mt--dora-residents-frustrated-after-police-chief-s-departure->

Spectrum News 13
June 8, 2022

Many Mount Dora residents frustrated after police chief's departure

Author: Katie Striet

The City of Mount Dora is seeing a change in leadership within its police department. Last week, Police Chief Brett Meade resigned because of differences in leadership. It's a change that many residents aren't happy about. One by one, residents of Mt. Dora are speaking out and standing in solidarity with Meade. "Someplace special. Without Brett Meade it is not someplace special. He has played a part in the someplace special," said Minister Lillie Taylor, a lifelong Mt. Dora resident. Meade became chief in July 2020. Since then many residents say he's improved the training of officers, as well as worked to build trust within the black and brown community. "I just hate that this cycle keeps happening. It seems like every 2-3 years we're having to start over from scratch. And I'm tired, I'm tired," said Rev. Bobby Rowe. Rev. Rowe was working with Meade on building that trust. But with a new chief, comes uncertainty, not just for residents, but for men and women in uniform. "Every time there's a transition with a major member of administration, it's like losing a parent," said Michael J. Saxe, a chaplain for Clermont and Mount Dora Police.

The sudden resignation left many people confused as to why it happened. Just last year, the Mount Dora fire chief resigned. Resident, Rozann Abato, looks towards city administration for the reason. "Much of the written information I gathered is very revealing. It appears he was threatened with termination, in writing, twice in less than 24 hours. Is it any surprise he resigned," said Abato. She goes on to give more examples on how Mount Dora City Manager **Patrick C. Comiskey**, who was present at Tuesday's meeting, may be a factor in a larger issue within the city. "This debacle raises other management related issues. For example, the city has no finance director, no public works director, and no permanent fire chief despite the fact that interim chief rich loewer has been in that role for months. Is there an end in sight and who is running this show," said Abato. Spectrum News 13 reached out to **Comiskey** on the recent event and he sent us back a statement that read: "On Wednesday, June 1, 2022, I received and accepted the resignation of Police Chief Brett Meade. The decision to resign was unilaterally made by former Chief Meade. As you all know, the former Chief was very visible in our community and scored high marks for attending festivals, events, and meetings with civic groups, as well as engaging with local citizens and business owners. We appreciate his service to our community, and we wish him well as he enters the next chapter of his life" Spectrum News 13 also submitted a FOIA request, asking for all communications between **Comiskey** and Meade in the last year. They have confirmed receiving the request.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.facebook.com/CityofMountDora/posts/the-city-of-mount-dora-is-pleased-to-introduce-our-new-city-manager-patrick-comi/10160272382724467/>

Facebook
November 15, 2021

The City of Mount Dora is pleased to introduce our new City Manager, Patrick Comiskey.

Patrick C. Comiskey was selected as City Manager of the City of Mount Dora on September 29, 2021, with a start date of November 15, 2021. **Patrick** brings with him more than 20 years' experience as a city manager, having served at the City of Cambridge, Maryland from 2018 to 2021, the City of Thomaston, Georgia from 2002 to 2016, and the City of Wellsburg, West Virginia from 1998 to 2002. In addition, he served as the Director of Purchasing and Personnel, and then as the Director of Personnel at the City of Clarksburg, West Virginia from 1993 to 1998. Prior to working in local government, **Patrick** was the District Executive for the Boy Scouts of America in Clarksburg/Parkersburg, West Virginia.

Patrick received a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Florida, Bachelor of Science in Business with a concentration in Accounting from Middle Georgia State University and Master of Public Administration from West Virginia University. Additionally, he is an Eagle Scout, Certified Purchasing Manager (C.P.M.) and a member of International City Managers Association (ICMA), Institute of Supply Management (ISM), and a lifelong member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. His prior service includes Harrison County United Way Allocations Committee Chair, Flint River Council Commissioner, Pine Mountain District Membership Chairman, and Thomaston and Wellsburg Kiwanis Clubs.

Patrick resides in Mount Dora with his wife Jane (a native Floridian) and their handsome dog Weaver. He enjoys hiking with Weaver, reading and learning American and Irish history, exploring places with Jane, and spending time with friends and family. He is excited to join the City of Mount Dora and looks forward to working with residents, business owners, visitors and councilmembers to showcase Someplace Special.

“The family and I are extremely excited to join the Mount Dora community. I am confident that Mount Dora's best years lie ahead of us. We have a great team here and I am excited to build upon that team as we continue to serve the residents of this great city.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Dorchester Star
July 9, 2021

Cambridge City Manager Comiskey to step down

Author: Mike Detmer

City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** has declined to seek renewal of his employment contract when the current contract expires July 31, according to a statement from Cambridge Mayor Andrew Bradshaw. **Comiskey**, who was hired following a search in 2018, is Cambridge's second city manager, having served in that role for three years. Bradshaw said, "**Mr. Comiskey's** time as city manager has seen many transitions for Cambridge, with development and growth occurring across the city."

"I wish **Patrick**, his wife Jane, and their beautiful dog Weaver all the best in the next phase of **Patrick's** career," said Bradshaw. "The care they all have shown for the city of Cambridge, and their work to make this city a better place to call home cannot be overstated. **Patrick's** good-heartedness and genuine love for others makes him the kind of public servant that is an asset anywhere he goes."

The Council echoed the mayor on the decision. Ward 1 Commissioner Brian Roche said, "I've appreciated **Mr. Comiskey's** service and assistance while Cambridge continues to go through inevitable growing pains of the early stages of our professionally managed form of government." Commission President Lajan Cephas, Ward 2, added, "We must remember that at the completion of each lap, the City Commission did not run the race alone. **Mr. Comiskey**, thank you for the contributions you and your wife Jane have provided to the city of Cambridge."

Ward 3 Commissioner Jameson Harrington said, "It was always a pleasure to see **Mr. Comiskey** out at the many local events and businesses in Cambridge. It was nice to have a city manager involved with the local community." Ward 4 Commissioner Spuddy Cephas said, "**Mr. Comiskey**, thank you for time and commitment to the city of Cambridge. Best wishes on your future endeavors. Continue to share your knowledge and skillsets."

Ward 5 Commissioner Chad Malkus wrote, "I want to wish **Patrick** all the best in his future endeavors and to thank him for the great work he did over the past few years. I look forward to the hiring process for a new city manager, and my hope is that we can hire someone with equally extensive municipal experience and knowledge of strong fiscal governance."

The mayor and commissioners will discuss the city manager vacancy at an upcoming meeting in July. A review of requirements will occur with regard to naming an interim city manager, as well as requirements for search committee members for the hiring of a permanent city manager.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WMDT.com
December 15, 2020

Cambridge officials discuss recent development plans, other city projects

Author: Kyleigh Panetta

The current mayor of Cambridge and City Council held their final meeting Monday night, before an entirely new group of people take over those roles in January. “There’s hope for a lot of activity out there. The state has been an important player and very excited about it,” says **Patrick Comiskey**, the City Manager for Cambridge.

Waterfront development was one of the main topics discussed at Monday’s Cambridge City Council meeting. More specifically, a piece of land known as the Gateway was officially turned over to Cambridge Waterfront Development Incorporated (CWDI). “As the development occurs they can work with the community to plan on a garden or open space or murals to make that area look more inviting to people come down route so they’ll come into the city,” says Stephen Rideout, a Cambridge City Commissioner.

CWDI is also planning to develop other properties in the city in the future but officials felt those discussions should be postponed. “Everybody kind of felt it was the type of project that the new city commission and the new mayor ought to be involved with since they are going to be the ones carrying the project forward,” says **Comiskey**. “There’s an interest there of the current Yacht Maintenance to expand their facility. They’re going to put in a larger lift. They’ve already told council this a while back, when the city commission leased additional land, that they were going to go in put in a big lift to bring bigger boats in.”

CWDI, in partnership with BCTDesign Group, is launching an online survey to get ideas and opinions about the future of waterfront development at Sailwinds. Officials say ideas will be considered by CWDI in the shaping of a development master plan which will guide development decisions over the next several years. The Cambridge Waterfront area subject to development planning extends from the Burton Fishing Bridge to Cambridge Creek and encompasses approximately 40 acres.

The survey website is <https://www.bctdesigngroup.com/cambridge>. It can be accessed beginning December 10th. If you prefer a paper copy of the questionnaire, you can contact Sandra Tripp-Jones, Executive Director, by email or phone at 805-453-4480. City leaders also shared plans to fix up the fencing at Cornish Park on Phillips Street. “It was a no brainer. The state was providing most of the money. The city had to put in a little and the county put in a little and it will make that park a more attractive place to be,” says Rideout. Perhaps one of the most exciting developments involves the Mace’s Lane Community Center. The city is officially on board with supporting programming there which may involve a potential chapter of the Boys & Girls Club of Annapolis. “I think it will provide an opportunity for us to help the children in this community and the elderly to have programming and resources that they have not had before,” says Rideout.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Meanwhile, Fairchild Properties is working on a few projects by the Walmart so city leaders say they're excited about that area's future as well. "It's good to see that there's still positive growth and interest in the development of the business community along the corridor," says **Comiskey**. The hospital will likely be moving into the new location in the Cambridge Marketplace late next year. The current hospital building will likely be demolished and that is expected to cost anywhere from one-million to two-million dollars. Additionally, Delmarva Community Services is planning to put a 61-unit housing building for seniors and low-income families on Chesapeake Avenue near the high school.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Star Democrat (Easton, MD)
December 1, 2020

Cambridge voters head to polls Tuesday for runoff elections

Author: Angela Price

Cambridge voters go to the polls Tuesday, Dec. 1, to decide three runoff elections — for mayor and commissioners for wards 2 and 3. Incumbent Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley faces challenger Andrew Bradshaw, and incumbent Ward 2 Commissioner Donald Cephas faces challenger Lajan Cephas. Gary Gordy and Jameson Harrington are vying for the Ward 3 seat. Voting will take place from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Chesapeake College at 418 Race Street. Anyone waiting in line at 7 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**, who also serves as election supervisor, said the post office had received 2,314 mail-in ballots as of Saturday morning, Nov. 28, 10% higher than what they received prior to the regular October election. With the high COVID-19 case rate and anticipating a large turnout, **Comiskey** said the standing distance for the hallway will be increased from 6 to 12 feet and the number of voters in the hallway will be limited. Bathrooms will only be available for the election workers.

Poll watchers will be limited to three in the room at any one time during voting. “We have three designated poll watching seats, so if we have more than three poll watchers, one will have to wait until the first watcher has been allowed to watch for one hour,” **Comiskey** said. Voters must enter the college from the rear entrance. Only poll watchers and candidates may enter and exit the building from the front entrance on Race Street.

Once the polls are closed, six seats will be made available for each candidate or designee to sit and watch the ballot tabulating process, though it is not mandatory, **Comiskey** said. Candidates who do not want to wait and watch will be sent email when the process is finished. He estimated it will take three hours or more to count all the votes — mail in and in person — and announce the results. A camera has been set up so people can watch the counting process from home using town hall streams, **Comiskey** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WMDT.com
August 30, 2020

Cambridge residents protest alleged illegal tactics by city officials

Author: Camila Fernandez

Protestors gathered in front of City Hall on Sunday to try to put an end to the city's alleged corruption and illegal tactics that prevent residents from choosing who they want for mayor. The event was organized by the group Millennials Demanding Change. City of Cambridge Commissioner La-Shon Foster spoke at the peaceful protest. She says the City Manager and other city representatives are scheming to have her application for mayor denied.

City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** tells us none of the applications have been rejected, but according to Foster, they haven't even approved hers since she brought it in on August 19th. Foster says the city hasn't been clear enough about the information they're looking for in order to accept her application. On top of that, she says they had an illegal hearing about her residency, which she won but still hasn't gotten her application approved. "This rally out here is not for La-Shon Foster," said Foster. "It's for every citizen in Cambridge that wants to choose who they want as their candidate and it's for every single candidate that wants to get on the ballot that will be illegally given the runaround not to apply," said Foster.

City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** responded to the allegations saying, "Commissioner Foster's allegations are false. No prospective candidate has been denied. Seven of the eight prospective candidates reviewed thus far by both the election committee and the city's ethics commission have been asked to provide missing or additional required information, including Ms. Foster and the current mayor, Ms. Jackson-Stanley.

The deadline to file for candidacy is Wednesday, September 2, at 4 pm. A listing of the candidate names will be posted on the city's website and the city's Facebook page Wednesday evening and later in the local newspapers. The city will be mailing out a ballot to all registered city voters in late September. City election officials are expecting this election to have the highest voter participation in city history."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WMDT.com
August 12, 2020

Cambridge city manager announces ongoing plans for the Pine Street revitalization project
Author: DeJon Burgess

The city of Cambridge is well into their revitalization efforts in a neighborhood that desperately needs it, despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. According to city manager, **Patrick Comiskey**, says the revitalization of Pine Street is moving forward. He says Pine Street has a number of homes that have fallen into disrepair, which is why these revitalization efforts are underway.

Comiskey says the city has had the benefit of working with the choptank chapter of the habitat for humanity on this. He says they are much more experienced when it comes to building homes and they've already completed building some homes some on high street.

We're told people can expect to see the demolishing of some homes in the area soon now that the city council has given their approval. **Comiskey** says the city has quote, "acquired some properties with our partners on this project, the county government. They have been good about working with us to help us secure properties that need to be demolished or fit in to our hopeful revitalization plan." **Comiskey** also says the city has brought on a new housing specialist to work with city commissioners to help with the revitalization project.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Banner (Cambridge, MD)
July 8, 2020

City confronts fireworks attacks

Author: Dave Ryan

“Our firefighters are being assaulted,” Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley said during a City Council conference call on Thursday afternoon. It’s not only firefighters, either — police officers have been in the line of fire in recent nights, as storms of fireworks have been ignited in the streets of the city. Police patrols and firefighters responding to incidents have been met with verbal abuse, physical attacks and more. “One of our officers had fireworks thrown or shot at them,” in the 800 block of Phillips Street on Wednesday night, CPD Capt. Justin Todd said in an earlier conversation with the Banner.

Vehicle damaged

That assault caused minor damage to the officer’s vehicle. “No one is in custody for that as of yet,” Capt. Todd said. Residents of this usually quiet town have been losing sleep and sometimes feeling threatened in their own homes, as loud explosives have been set off, sometimes all night long. Those who live in other neighborhoods might not see it in their own streets, but many have heard the loud booms echoing across the city. Incidents have occurred not only on Phillips Street, but also Greenwood Avenue, South Pine, Central Avenue and other areas. “It’s all over town,” the mayor said.

The meeting got off to a rocky start, as the numbers of residents calling in to listen or comment exceeded the limit of 40, causing some council members to have trouble getting linked in. After that was straightened out, the mayor, commissioners, City Attorney Chip MacLeod, State’s Attorney Bill Jones, Rescue Fire Company Chief Adam Pritchett and City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** were on the line to examine the issue, as were about three dozen citizens.

Gathering comments

The council is gathering comments from the public and findings of fact from the Cambridge Police Department necessary to impose a curfew on city residents under the age of 18 in an effort to deter late-night incidents including the pyrotechnic disruptions. That’s not something that simply be declared, however. “There is a process to doing this,” Mr. MacLeod said, beginning with recommendations from law enforcement. “Curfews can be tricky, but they can be navigated, if done so carefully,” Mr. Jones said. The facts presented to the council would have to justify the curfew, he said, which itself should be no more restrictive than necessary. “There are certain things we have to be careful about, in terms of making sure the curfew, if enacted, is applied fairly and equally to all parts of town,” Mr. Jones said. “It would have to be carefully written, and carefully executed, by your officers.”

Cambridge Police Department Chief Mark Lewis said, “It would be a limited tool for our officers to use in situations. There is a juvenile issue, a problem in some areas, and that would be used as a last resort,” to help get juveniles to return to their homes. Five men were arrested earlier this

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

week, as the CPD tries to bring the situation under control. Richard Blanks Jr., 31; Byron Herndon, 29; Donnell Jones, 25; Naail Thompson, 20; and Tyonbre McKnight, 19 were charged with discharge of fireworks without a permit and related offenses. Chief Pritchett said his organization has been stretched thin by emergencies caused during the incidents. “We’ve had five fires since Friday, directly from fireworks,” he said.

Young children

Though the men charged in connection with the discharges of explosive devices are not minors, there have been reports of children, some quite young, being on the streets at all hours. “How do we hold parents responsible?” Mayor Jackson-Stanley asked. Mr. Jones said there are legal avenues through which parents can be held responsible for the actions of minor children, including violation of curfews.

Citizen Lynette Wongus called for quick action and an increased police presence in neighborhoods — in person, not only in their patrol cars. “People are afraid, in their own apartments,” she said. “We will have officers working overtime,” Chief Lewis said. Ms. Wongus didn’t leave it all up to law enforcement, as she urged residents to speak up to protect their community. “As residents, we need to step up,” she said.

The need to allow public comment required another meeting to be scheduled, this one for Tuesday at 5 p.m., on townhallstreams.com. The mayor and council acknowledged that public comment had been limited by the technical difficulties, and asked that citizens email their comments on these issues to **Mr. Comiskey** at pComiskey@chooscambridge.com. “We want to work with the police department and the community to resolve the problems that have been presented to us for solution,” Commissioner Steve Rideout (Ward 1) said a public email. “We need to hear from you.”

Mr. Comiskey forwarded the comments to the mayor and council by Saturday, allowing them to consider citizens’ views before Tuesday’s meeting, which took place after press time for this issue.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Banner (Cambridge, MD)
June 24, 2020

City protesters demand racial equality

Author: Dave Ryan

A series of protests took place in Cambridge on Friday, during Juneteenth observances across the nation remembering the day in 1865 when the last slaves were freed. Local groups gathered in this city, known for its civil rights activism, to call for racial equality. Recent deaths of African Americans, some at the hands of police officers, have set off protests in cities and towns across the country. Though some of the events have turned violent, most did not, including the ones that have taken place in Cambridge since the May 25 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. As he was pinned to the street by former officer Derek Chauvin, one of Mr. Floyd's last statements was, "I can't breathe." Those words were echoed in the name of the group that organized the day's first demonstration, "United We Breathe." Also taking place Friday was a cross-town march by "Millennials Demanding Change," and work on the "Black Lives Matter" mural on Race Street.

United We Breathe

The day's first event began in the parking lot of Cambridge Marketplace, where a multi-ethnic group displayed signs calling for justice and equality. United We Breathe began their demonstration some time ago, and found that it would occur on Juneteenth. "Everything happens for a reason," said Marjorie Vilson, who with Gerleene Dorce, Michiah Grainger and Shaneka Vickerie form the leadership of the group. "Our goal is to promote justice everywhere." She said the demonstration was to celebrate 155 years of freedom and to honor the lives of taken unjustly by police brutality.

Ms. Vilson acknowledged that it can be a painful process to create change, but a necessary one to correct half-measures made in the past to rectify the country's social and racial issues. She was pleased with the turnout for the demonstration, which included elders and young children, black and white, and a man beating a rhythm on a Native American drum. Cooperation also came from local authorities, something not seen everywhere in the nation over the previous few weeks. "We want to thank the Police Chief [Mark Lewis], and the Mayor [Victoria Jackson-Stanley] and the City Manager [**Patrick Comiskey**]," Ms. Vilson said. "They definitely made this process easy," Ms. Dorce said.

Ms. Vilson saw the surge of activity both locally and nationally as a part of a generational change. "We have millennials taking charge," she said. That generation's familiarity with digital tools and social media means messages and organization spreads faster than ever. Mr. Floyd's death, and his calling for his mother in his final moments, created a feeling, Ms. Vilson said, of, "Enough is enough." The group moved from the parking lot to the side of U.S. 50, where participants held up signs with messages including, "Justice for All," "Black Lives Matter," "The Second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself," and "The Revolution will be televised." Many passing motorists blew their horns and waved to show their support. There

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

was also the occasional shouted insult and obscenity. Now, the organization's youthful energy and passion is being used to organize new groups and projects. The activists of United We Breathe are working to set up an official non-profit organization, Ms. Vilson said. To contact the group or to donate, email unitedwebbreathe2020@gmail.com, or call 443-304-8827. "I pray that this not be in vain," Ms. Vilson said.

Millennials Demanding Change

The new generation was also on the street across town, where Millennials Demanding Change had scheduled a march with guest speakers at stops. Mya Woods, one of the leaders, said, "I feel as though the older generation fought their fight." "It's time for the younger generation," she said, looking over to where her son sat in his stroller. "I'm doing it for my baby." She said she didn't want the days to continue in which African-American parents have "the talk" with their sons, about the dangers of contact with police. "It's a real conversation," she said. Ms. Woods sensed a change in viewpoints among her peers. "Our generation is filled with open-minded people," she said. "I feel like this generation will be the one to change things." Organizers of Millennials Demanding Change, in addition to Ms. Woods, are Alondria Stanley, LaSarah Kinser, James Sullivan, Marco Garcia and Meg McDermott." Dr. Richard Molock, a pharmacist, was there, as well. "We're here to finish the work that was done in the 1960s," he said. Part of his motivation is his own home life, where he has to consider the future of his children and the situations they could face. "I have four young men," he said. As participants gathered before the march began at 3:30 p.m., Veronica Taylor spoke about the effect of modern communications and devices — when something happens, citizens around the nation don't have to take anyone's word for the facts of the matter, they can often see for themselves on their phones or tablets how a crisis unfolded. "Technology has changed everything," Ms. Taylor said. Dr. Molock said activists today must maintain their unity and focus on the issues, which include not only police brutality, but also housing and other economic inequities. "You have people who are intentionally dividing everyone," he said. As a pharmacist who treats patients the same regardless of race, he didn't see the sense in that. "You're a human, I'm a human," he said.

Race Street mural

Race Street has a message for residents of the town and anyone else driving through downtown. "Black Lives Matter" is being painting in large white letters down the middle of the road, created by a group of activists and artists. The display mirrors a similar project in Washington, D.C., in which city workers painted the same words on 16th St. Similar street displays have been created in other cities, including Salisbury. Organizers of the Race Street project Alpha Genesis Community Development Corporation Jermaine Anderson and Adrian Greene pulled together permission, volunteers and supplies in just a few days, and got to work on the job early last week. The words, "Black Lives Matter" stretch almost the width of the street, and for most of the length of the 400 block. The letters are decorated with portraits of civil rights leaders including Gloria Richardson and Frederick Douglas, as well as images of life in Cambridge. The design for the mural was created by local artist Miriam Moran, who worked in cooperation with Project Manager Shelton Hawkins. She works fast when inspired by an idea. "It took me about an hour to come up with the design," Ms. Moran said. Her goal was to create an image promoting unity, love and compassion. "I wanted everybody to come together," she said. LaSarah Kinser finished

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

marching with her group and headed to Race Street to paint, a natural move for the Mace's Lane Middle School art teacher. "A project like this is so important because all these people are volunteers," showing unity in purpose, she said. Ms. Kinser said public art is an effective way to communicate a message of protest in a peaceful way, something that is used in many areas. But the mural has its own, unique merits, she said. "The difference is that Miriam was able to fill in our specific Dorchester County history," Ms. Kinser said. "It really speaks to who we are as a community." Alpha Genesis promotes the arts as a way to forge bonds. "Each community has its own soul," a statement from the group said Sunday. "Cambridge's soul is one of resilience." "We can really learn a lot from projects like this," the statement said. "When people are moved, the arts are truly an outlet for people to speak and come together for a common cause as one voice, with many gifts and talents to share."

Legal approval

The mural received city approval on June 16. The legalities involved were confirmed by State's Attorney for Dorchester County Bill Jones, who visited the scene as volunteers were busy with their brushes. "It's nice to see how everyone has come together," he said. "Certainly it highlights an issue that is significant nationally and right here." As the county's highest law-enforcement officer and a former policeman, Mr. Jones has a unique perspective on issues regarding brutality. "The vast majority of cops are good people who do it right," he said, while acknowledging the value of the work being done on Race Street. "Still, we have to double down on those who are bad officers." Asked about comments made by opponents saying the project was illegal or vandalism of public property, Mr. Jones said he and his staff had researched the issue of painting on a street. "We saw nothing in the law that would prevent this," he said. As for vandalism, he said in the law that is referred to as "malicious destruction of property," with the first word in the phrase being the operative one. Glancing down the block at the group working on the mural, he said, "Show me the malice." Finally, he noted that the city owns the street, and had approved the project. "Who would be the complainant?" he asked. The statement from Alpha Genesis said, "We're not feeding into any negative comments, thoughts or actions. We'll continue to bring awareness to facing race through art and culture." "Change is never easy, but necessary," the message said. "To our young people, keep your light shining."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Myeasternshore.com
May 15, 2020

Cambridge City Manager explains Council's State of Emergency renewal

Author: Mike Detmer

Cambridge's City Manager clarified the City's recent renewal of the declaration of the local State of Emergency in a statement on Thursday, May 14. In the explanation, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** wrote the renewal of the existing declaration of emergency at the May 11 live streamed council meeting was to "make certain the city did not exclude itself from any federal funding that becomes available."

Comiskey said that the City of Cambridge will continue to comply with Gov. Hogan's pandemic-related orders. The statement also said that city parks and the marina are opened, while playgrounds, basketball courts, and picnic tables are closed. City buildings will remain closed to the public, and city meeting will continue to be live streamed for remote participation for city officials and citizens.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Myeasternshoremnd.com
May 15, 2020

City of Cambridge introduces annual budget, hearing before vote set for May 26

Author: Mike Detmer

The Cambridge City Council introduced the ordinance that includes the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021, and announced a public hearing on the ordinance on May 26. Cambridge Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley and the Council members introduced Ordinance 1162, which sets real and personal property tax rates, and Ordinance 1163, which is the City's budget for July 1, 2020—June 30, 2021.

The mayor, council, and city staff began the public discussion of the budget with a work session on May 1, and a follow up budget work session on May 5. The scheduled work session for May 7 was not needed. After the May 26 hearing, the Council can opt to pass the budget, which will then take effect July 1.

During the first work session, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** said the biggest issue about the budget was the COVID-19 crisis. He said \$1.9 million of revenue could be at risk, and recommended the City use reserve funds set aside for emergencies in order to cover shortfalls. The Council grappled with requests from the police department for consideration to replace two retiring officers and from Rescue Fire Company to acquire more turnout gear to replace worn out gear and properly equip all members. The May 26 meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Patrick C. Comiskey** is listed below]

<https://cambridgecan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/09.13.2018-BD.pdf>
September 13, 2018

Board of Directors Meeting

September 13, 2018

Minutes

City Manager, Mr. **Patrick Comiskey**. CAN President Chuck McFadden introduced new Cambridge City Manager, Mr. **Patrick Comiskey**, who has been on the job here for about six weeks. **Mr. Comiskey** was born in Havre de Grace, grew up in Aberdeen, and still has family in Maryland, as well as many local ties. He has worked in local government throughout his career and comes to Cambridge from a similar position in Georgia

Mr. Comiskey has been impressed by many positive things in Cambridge, including the natural beauty of the area with its energy and conservation projects and its parks and recreation programs; its attractive Visitors' Center; forward-looking planning activities, including riverfront and medical facility development; and as energetic spirit of volunteerism. His goals for Cambridge include increasing home ownership and expanding job opportunities.

Based on his six weeks here, **Mr. Comiskey** considers the biggest challenges to be: infrastructure maintenance and improvement (water/ sewer, roads, and homeowner responsibility for sidewalks); economic growth; City employee salaries and benefits; City equipment replacement costs; housing; equipment replacement costs; housing; and code enforcement. He invited the audience to send him suggestions in the following areas: (a) Big ideas to make Cambridge brighter; (b) small-scale tasks that would improve Cambridge; and (c) best things to like about Cambridge. CAN will distribute these questions to all its members.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Patrick Comiskey** is listed below.]

[CB&A Note: Please note that **Patrick Comiskey** also made the Presidents and Dean's List for the Summer Semester, ending September 2017]

<https://www.mga.edu/news/2018/01/presidents-deans-fall2017.php>
January 9, 2018

MGA Announces Fall 2017 President's And Dean's Lists

Author: News Bureau

Middle Georgia State University announces the 2017 fall semester President's List and Dean's List. Students on the President's List had a grade point average of at least 3.8. The Dean's List includes students who had at least a 3.5 grade point average. Students must take a certain number of credit hours to qualify.

The President's List (the Dean's List follows):

Thomaston GA
 Patrick Conway Comiskey

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Upson Post
January 14, 2016

After 14 years of Progress, Thomaston City Manager Patrick Comiskey Resigns – Letter of Resignation

Thomaston Mayor J.D. Stallings and Thomaston City Council
106 E. Lee Street
Thomaston, GA 30286
January 5, 2016

Dear Mayor Stallings and City Council:

I am submitting my resignation from the post of Thomaston City Manager. I am willing to continue to serve the city until such time as the mayor and city council secure another city manager. I am also willing to serve during a period of transition with a new manager. There are several projects we have in process that are in the works for 2016.

Silvertown West Village Neighborhood Sewer Line Replacement

This Project is potentially the largest sewer line replacement project we have undertaken. The mayor and city council approved a predevelopment and planning grant application at the November 3rd city council meeting to develop the project for submittal to the USDA. If successful, the city will receive up to \$3.5 million dollars of grant funds in the form of a forgivable loan so long as we borrow at least \$1.5 million at an interest rate of approximately 2%. We expect to hear back on this by August.

The plan is to build new sewer lines in the alleys or in the street, if the current sewer line runs in front of the houses, and run the household services to the new lines. The old lines would be grouted in and the manholes buried into the ground. Another objective is to replace part of the current force main at the lift station behind Walmart with a ductile iron line. A further objective, maybe not with this project, is to run a new sewer line up Town Branch to the lift station behind West Central Bank so the sewage might flow with gravity down the new line and the lift station might be closed and taken down. If we have success with this project, the next step would be to apply for the same project to replace out all the sewer lines in East Silvertown using the same strategy.

Silvertown West Village Water Line Replacement Project

We plan to submit a CDBG grant application to the state's DCA office this spring for a \$500,000 grant for replacing water lines in the southern half of Silvertown West Village from West Goodrich to the Silvertown Ballpark. This project will also involve sidewalk replacement in the same area. The city has already submitted a request for a loan with \$500,000 in loan forgiveness from GEFA for 2016. We will borrow approximately \$1.5 million at a reduced loan rate (we received a rate of 1.03% on the last loan). We use the GEFA loan to strengthen our CDBG application showing the city's additional investment in the project. We should hear back on the

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

GEFA loan forgiveness by March. The word on the CDBG grant will probably be announced in August.

In 2018, we plan to submit the other half of West Village for the same work. The plan from there is to jump over the highway and march through the remainder of Silvertown, then continue south through town submitting a \$2.5 million project every other year.

Storm Water Replacement Project

We submitted a loan request last week for a \$2 million dollar storm water grant through GEFA. The objective is to put together several storm water replacement projects such as the line from E. Main that runs through Weaver Park, the road area at the end of N. Green Street, storm water retention and filter beds along Bell Creek, and possibly the line that runs under businesses in the downtown. The loan request we made includes \$400,000 in loan forgiveness. We should hear back on the loan forgiveness availability by March.

Silvertown Tennis Courts

The county is required to expend \$200,000 toward the Silvertown Tennis courts. The original plan to build two sets of two courts over the existing site ran three times that amount. The best option might be to replace one set of the tennis courts with grade A courts and create or allow a second utility court for whiffle ball and/or pickle ball.

Lake Thomaston Development

The city acquired the railroad spur from Norfolk Southern Company that runs inside the lake side property and continues out toward Hugo Starling Drive. A link up with Hugo Starling Drive and an additional linkage along the power line easement south of Avenue F would allow a bike trail to develop for Lake Thomaston to Weaver Park. The city has already developed linkages between Barnesville Highway and Avenue F and from Dye Branch to the civic center swimming pool. A linkage was developed from Weaver Park to Matthews Field with the help of the county government.

Lake Thomaston Proper

The plan for Lake Thomaston is to hire lifeguards to work in pairs at the lake under a head lifeguard three days a week (Friday through Sunday) from spring through the fall after the construction is completed. The city workers will haul sand from Butler and develop a beach adjacent to the boat docks. Citizens will be able to check out small fishing craft, canoes, kayaks, paddle boards (the stand on upright boards gaining popularity today), paddle boats, or small sail boats and navigate most of the 70-acre lake. The city would also rent out bikes for use on the 1.6-mile loop trail that surrounds the lake. Later, bike renters will be able to take the bikes out of the lake park site and travel to Weaver Park and the town square.

The band shell will be ripe for hosting concerts or plays sponsored by the city or other community or civic groups or churches. Fifteen percent of the current rentals for the pavilion at the Greatest Generation Park are from citizens that reside outside Upson County. It is likely the lake will draw people to Thomaston from adjoining counties.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The following personnel opportunities are coming up this winter.

Police Department

We planned to have the Georgia Police Chief Association put together an assessment center for promotional opportunities for an additional patrol lieutenant position (giving us two patrol Lieutenant spots), a patrol sergeant position, and a detective sergeant position (in addition to the two we currently have). These positions are in addition to the reopening of the administrative officer and lead detective positions. The association director advised that the next available opportunity to undertake an assessment would be in February. The new police chief will sit on a panel to review each position. The new police chief will also have a number of police officer applications to review.

Fire Department

We are inviting the firefighters to apply for three available Lieutenant positions. The process should wrap up by April.

Street Department

We need to post an opening for the Street Department Crew Leader position. We will likely have several applications from inside the city. A good candidate will be Horace Montfort who has been relied upon to handle work orders and field citizen requests.

If anyone has any questions about these or other projects, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Patrick Comiskey

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 18, 2015

City holds budget hearings

Author: Larry Stanford

The City of Thomaston is beginning a series of public hearings on the 2016 budget today at noon in the council meeting room of Thomaston-Upson Government Complex on East Lee Street. The General Fund Budget is proposed to be \$7,409,925, a reduction of \$1,060,000 from the 2015 budget. The Electric Fund is proposed to be \$15,245,407, while the Water and Sewer Fund is proposed at \$7,553,053. For residents and business owners in the city, the good news is that the city is not considering a tax increase, nor an increase in electricity rates. However, water and sewer rate increases are expected to be approved. The water increase would be 43 cents per 1,000 gallons, and the sewer increase would be 35 cents per 1,000 gallons. For a household which uses 5,000 gallons a month, the total increase would be around \$3.90. But, warns City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**, the city needs to come up with new revenue or get their current tax revenue up because the tax digest continues to shrink. The Thomaston City Council held a work session on December 7 to go over the proposed budget. Newly sworn in City Councilman Ryan Tucker, as well as council members-elect LaKeiitha Reeves and Jeff Middlebrooks, along with mayor-elect J. D. Stallings, attended the meeting and **Comiskey** took time to explain each part of the budget process to the newly elected members. With the exception of Tucker, the newly-elected members will not take office until January 1, 2016, and will not vote on the new budget.

Electricity

The proposed budget for Electricity is \$15,245,407. **Comiskey** began the session by discussing the cost of electricity to the city, which is a member of and receives its power from the Municipal Electric Association of Georgia (MEAG). “In the last decade, the cost of electricity has grown dramatically,” **Comiskey** said. “From 2005 to last year, our cost of electricity grew basically about 50 percent over the last decade. Meanwhile, our billing to our customers only grew roughly 28 to 29 percent. In essence, we’ve absorbed about a million dollars worth of electric costs increases over the last decade. The money we were making 10 years ago is not the money we are making today. We are pulling in less money versus expenses, and we never passed on all those expenses. “One of the things that we’ve heard in the community is, ‘Our bills have gone up.’ They haven’t gone up as much as our bills that we pay to purchase the electricity,” **Comiskey** stated. “As a result, our margins are smaller, which means we have less money to work with than we had 10 years ago with the electric utility.”

Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head put the issue of electrical revenue into context. “There has been a lot of conversation about the utility rates and can you lower them. The thing that is the challenge at that point is that we aren’t passing along even close to what the increases have been. But in addition to that, this electric fund, along with taxes, is the heart of the body. It is able to pay the expenses to provide the services that we’ve got. It supports the water utility, and all the other expenses. In 2014, we transferred \$1,239,000 out of the electric fund. That is how much blood this heart is pumping to cover expenses for all the other services we provide.” Reeves and

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PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Middlebrooks still expressed concern about those in their districts who are not always able to pay a high utility bill. **Comiskey** replied that the city works with people every month who are having problems paying their bills. He added that they are also looking into working out a budget program where, based on their past history, customers would be given a set price to pay every month in order to be able to maintain their services.

Water and Sewer

The proposed budget for Water and Sewer is \$7,553,053. As an overview, **Comiskey** noted that water usage in the city declined every year between 2007 and 2013. “The first two years, our biggest single customer was Martha Mills, and they shut down,” **Comiskey** said. “Yamaha shut down. We lost about 55 percent of our industrial users over two years. Then the county started putting in wells, and we lost some more there. “People tend to use the same amount of water. Historically, people are using a little more electricity each year. That’s why through the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s, if you had an electric utility, you automatically had growth and revenue. That’s no longer the case. But with water, people always use about the same amount each year, so the only chance you have to get more revenue is with new customers coming in, or with price increases. We’ve had the inverse – we’ve lost 37 percent of our customers over that time, and our revenue has gone down. “

Mayor Arnold added that the city has had to increase rates, but has tried to so gently. “We have incrementally worked on increasing water and sewer for 15 years,” he said. “We’ve had to, because we cannot justifiably sap the electric department for more and more money to subsidize water and sewer, and if you don’t keep bumping your water and sewer rates, that’s exactly what will happen.” **Comiskey** said since 2007, the amount of water usage has dropped 39 percent (300 million gallons) because of the loss of customers, yet the cost of the chemicals and other items needed to keep the water safe has continually increased in price.

Victor Cozart, the Project Manager with Severn Trent, the company contracted by the city to run the water and sewer department, said the main increase in the budget of \$175,000 is for the purchase and installation of a SCADA system which would greatly automate the system. Cozart noted that many of the current water system employees are nearing retirement age, and water and sewer work is not attracting younger workers to replace those retiring. He said the SCADA system will automatically keep track of everything at the water and sewer plants, and if something goes wrong, will send out an alert to the system operator. Cozart estimated that the system could conceivably pay for itself within two years with personnel retiring and by not having to replace those personnel. **Comiskey** stated with the proposed increase in water and sewer rates, with a household average 5,000 gallons a month, the increase would be \$3.90. The increase is projected to provide \$166,000 for water and \$107,000 for sewer in revenue gain.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 2, 2015

Thomaston Council approves budget revisions
Purchase of boats, increase in legal services among changes
Author: Larry Stanford

\$50,000 for boats for Lake Thomaston, and other funds including an increase of \$40,000 for legal services and an increase of \$20,000 for professional services were approved by the Thomaston City Council in a budget revision at their meeting on November 3. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** explained some of the budget revisions to the council, who had sheets showing all the revisions in front of them. “Recognizing that part of our Uptown Downtown project spilled over into 2015, we have \$1.3 million as a recognition of work and expected loan reimbursement,” **Comiskey** stated. “Also, we had performed a project over by Interfor to move a water line in order to allow the intersection expansion there. Those costs and reimbursements are identified also. We have also identified changes in our General Fund, basically decreasing and increasing in our total expenditures.

“One of the items is a reduction from the Lake Thomaston budget \$25,000 for docks and \$50,000 for boats and accessories for the Lake Thomaston project,” **Comiskey** continued. “Also, we had upwards of \$50,000 for an additional CDBG project spillover from 2014 that we’re recognizing those expenditures in the offsetting revenues. Also we have our LMIG, which is our annual allocation that we receive from the state. We took two years of allocations to put towards our \$1.5 million milling, road reclamation and paving project that we did this summer.” Council member Patsy Perdue made a motion to approve the budget revision. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
November 15, 2015

Thomaston electric winter rates drop

Author: Larry Stanford

Thomaston electric power residential consumers may soon begin seeing a reduction in their city power bills as the winter electric rates have kicked in. At the Thomaston City Council meeting on November 10, City Clerk Clint Chastain advised the council and mayor that as of October 1, 2015, in accordance with the city's electric ordinance, the winter residential electric rates have been installed in the utility billing system and will be effective through May 20-16.

Mayor Hays Arnold stated that the winter rates represent a decrease of 15.2 percent for 1000 kw users from the summer rates. For 2000 kw users, the decrease will be 20.2 percent, and for 3000 kw users, the decrease is 32 percent. He added that the decrease should be good news for a lot of citizens. Chastain also noted that summer maximum usage of 20,000 gallons per month for billing sewer charges ended on September 30, 2015.

In other business, the council approved the city manager spending up to \$40,000 to have engineering, survey and design work done toward the installation of another trunk line along Town Branch for sewer purposes. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** noted that this is a long range project, but that this is the first step. City Attorney Joel Bentley added that they have found in past Town Branch projects that this is the best way to do it.

“One of the things that we’ve found on this Town Branch project is the difficulty that most of the easements that lie along this line are so old that they’re either prescriptive easements or they’re so poorly described that you can’t follow where they are,” Bentley said. “The benefit of doing it the way **Mr. Comiskey** is proposing is that it will be platted out, actual easements will be secured, and for posterity purposes, the easements have provisions in for future repairs and replacements as a part of the easement purchase price. For that reason, as the attorney, I would recommend that you undertake this project in the manner in which it is laid out.”

Comiskey said that as the project moves along, he will be recommending the city purchase portions of the property. “Just for clarification, because this is a trunk line that will be running along the creek, I’ll be recommending that the council purchase those sections not in traditional easements,” he said, “because of the long term expectations we’ll have with storm water down the road, and maintaining creek banks and things that will probably be the municipality’s responsibility in the long haul.” Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head made a motion to approve the city manager spending up to \$40,000 on the engineering, survey and design work. Council member Gary Atwater seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

The council also approved spending up to \$30,000 toward a grant application with the USDA for major sewer line replacement. “We’re seeking approval of a USDA pre-approval planning grant application authorizing the manager and mayor implement an application grant with USDA

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

requiring preliminary engineering,” **Comiskey** told the council. “This grant would be up to \$30,000, depending on what the authority would grant us. It would be an exploratory grant toward doing some major sewer lines replacement work and hopefully getting USDA to help us with that.” Mayor Arnold stated that he has read the pre-application and the certification for USDA grants and that everything is in order. Council member Patsy Perdue made a motion to approve the funds for the grant application. Atwater seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

Finally, the city council approved the appointment of Ryan Kellett to the Thomaston-Upson Transportation Committee. Kellett is an employee with the Georgia Department of Transportation and recently made a presentation to the council concerning the dangers of the city’s speed bumps. Mayor Arnold said Kellett has agreed to fill the position on the committee, and noted that the city has one more position on the committee that still needs to be filled. Perdue made a motion to approve the appointment of Kellett. Atwater seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
August 12, 2015

Lake Thomaston bids higher than expected - Bid on Lake Thomaston and Park Street \$45K over

Author: Larry Standford

The Thomaston City Council unanimously approved a bid of \$935,128 from Tommy Gibson Builders of Warner Robins for the construction of an amphitheater/boat storage building and pavilion with attached restrooms at Lake Thomaston Park, and a pavilion with attached restrooms at Park Street Playground. The action came at their August 4 meeting. Prior to their vote, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** advised them that the city received four bids for the project, with Tommy Gibson being the low bid. The other bidders and bids were Headley Construction for \$978,000, Renfroe Construction for \$999,000, and McLeroy Inc. for \$1,100,000. **Comiskey** also noted that included in the bid is \$50,000 for site and preparation work, and \$40,000 for any alterations that the city might decide to do beyond the original scope of work.

The Lake Thomaston Park project came as somewhat of a surprise to residents, who first read about it in their June city newsletter. The city has plans to build a boat storage building with a roof that will double as the stage for an amphitheater, and a pavilion with restrooms. The city could then rent canoes and small watercraft to visitors, and host band concerts and plays in the amphitheater. While the Lake Thomaston Park project has met with unanimous approval of the City Council since the beginning, it has caused a division between city residents, with some believing the city would be better off spending that money on other needs, such as more manpower in the police and fire departments, business retention, or lowering utility bills.

At their July 7 meeting, the council approved spending \$600,000 on the two buildings, and another \$200,000 on site work, for a total of \$800,000. Following the August 4 meeting, **Comiskey** answered questions from the local news media concerning the difference in the price approved by the council and the final bid. He noted that the bid also included a pavilion with restrooms at the Park Street Playground, and stated they had projected the cost of the amphitheater/boat storage building to be \$400,000, and the cost of the two pavilion/restrooms to be \$200,000 each. “We did the same footprint for the bathrooms at Park Place as we did for Greatest Generation and Lake Thomaston, with the idea that mirroring those would help to get a better bid price,” **Comiskey** said. “These buildings will have brick as opposed to what we used at Greatest Generation, with the idea that these buildings should last longer and be less maintenance than non-brick. The two new bathrooms will have pavilions on the sides of them. “We estimated these three buildings would cost \$800,000, so minus the \$50,000 for site work and the \$40,000 for anything extra, the bid came in \$45,000 over what we estimated.”

When asked if he could provide the price specifications on the buildings, **Comiskey** said he could not. “I can’t on the buildings, we did them all as a group,” he said. “We won’t know until the contractor will have to do that for us, because he did them all as a package, and he’ll be

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

providing that as we go through the project so we'll know where to post those payments." When questioned about the \$200,000 the council had approved for site work at Lake Thomaston, **Comiskey** stated they have more improvements planned. "\$600,000 was what we projected for the two buildings at Lake Thomaston, and then another \$200,000 to do any work out there in addition. We're also going to do other things down there besides the prep work for the building. We're hoping to put some docks in there for putting the boats on. That's something we hope to do within that \$200,000."

The city manager was also asked if the city was considering purchasing the corner lot at Lake Thomaston, on 6th Avenue next to the city water tower. He said they are looking into it. "We had talked to the previous owner 10 years ago," he said. "We had approached them again, and we may or may not, that depends on if the owner is interested and is interested in a price that we all can agree on. I would recommend that to the mayor and council. That would give us access to the reservoir property from 6th Avenue, rather than having to put it through the neighborhood. That was something we tried prior to building the reservoir. The funds to purchase that property would come from the water fund."

Comiskey said later that the city is also looking to replace the water tower next to the lot, and having it for truck staging and access would make it easier to do so. "That site is the ideal site to do that. We can build one and take the other one down. That tower wasn't built by the city; it was built by Thomaston Mills; they had two water towers in their system. The problem it is too short and doesn't integrate into our system, so what will happen probably, anytime after 2018, when it comes time to look at that tower and refurbishing it, we'll be looking at the option of building a bigger tower that can better integrate into our system."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
August 1, 2015

Citizen calls for mayor, manager to resign
Author: Ashley Biles

City of Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold and City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** received heated comments from a local citizen at last week's City Council meeting when Terrell Brooks stated he did not feel either gentleman had done anything for the community during their tenure. "For the people of Thomaston, black and white, you have not done anything," said Brooks. "You can get mad, but that is the way I feel and I feel it is time for a change." Brooks went on to ask for the resignation of both Mayor Arnold and Mr. **Comiskey** before adding that James Harris was going to run for mayor in the upcoming election. Mr. Harris was also present at the meeting and raised his hand and stated he intended to run. Mayor Arnold announced last year that he would not seek re-election at the end of this term; qualifying for those intending to run for the position will be in August. Also during the public comment portion of the meeting, Rhondalynn Traylor asked council several questions, with the first being for an update on Thomaston Police Officer Phillip Tobin. Both Arnold and **Comiskey** stated they did not have any information to share and City Attorney Joel Bentley stated he did not either as he is not the attorney assigned to the case. Traylor then asked when the terms for the mayor and the two council seats up for grabs end this year and Mayor Arnold stated the terms end on December 31. Traylor, who is part of the Thomaston Improvement Association, made the comment that the group will be working to have someone run for the council seats and for the position of mayor. She also asked for an update on candidates the city is considering for the position of Chief of Police for the Thomaston Police Department, however Bentley stated that was a personnel matter and the city would have no comment.

Prior to the public comments, Bentley had reminded the crowd of the rules of that section of the meeting. He stated the Mayor has the authority to keep the peace and has the right to ask the police to remove anyone who continue to disrupt the meeting. Another point he made was that each individual who signs up for public comment gets five minutes to speak, however no one may sign up and choose to give their allotted time to another individual. He also added that as a general rule, questions will be taken under advisement, but the council is not required to respond during the meeting. In reference to the rules, Traylor asked if it would be possible to have set bi-monthly meetings for citizens to meet with their district representatives and the police chief to discuss matters more in-depth than is allowed during the council meetings. "When we come to the meetings, of course we only have five minutes, but sometimes issues are more pressing than coming in here for five minutes and not getting any answers," said Traylor. "Is there any way we can have district meetings? That way when we get in here, it doesn't seem so improper when you are trying to ask a question that you can't get an answer to because you only have a certain amount of time." Bentley stated the City of Thomaston has a "city manager run" form of municipal government, which means City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** is the Chief Executive Officer for the city. He added that the mayor and council make the policy decisions and then the manager puts them into place, therefore **Comiskey** would be the person to discuss having

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

meetings with the police chief. Bentley also added that citizens would have to address their district council member about meeting with them. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head added that any citizen could call any councilmember at any time to say they would like to come speak with them about any city issue. The final question brought up by Traylor dealt with the options for youth activities in the community. “I know that we have to live with the \$800,000 decision for the park,” she said, referencing the recent unanimous vote for the Lake Thomaston Park project, “but we also have to have something equal for our youth development. We have not done anything, as far as the city or the county when it comes to youth development.” She suggested something such as a bowling alley or a skating rink that have been in the community before. Bentley stated the Recreation Department is a joint project between the city and county and to keep an eye out for when they meet to discuss the budget. He continued, stating the meeting between the two entities would be a public meeting and that would be the time to come and state that citizens would like to see more money being budgeted for recreation. Kelsey Rockemore had also signed up to speak during public comment; however he was not present at the meeting.

In other business, the council approved several items for improvements around town; with the first of those being the Glendale sewer line project. The council passed a motion which authorized the city manager to spend up to \$38,000 to complete the project. **Comiskey** told the council he is hoping to have the work done before school starts. Next, the council approved spending up to \$52,000 with Meeks Grading and up to \$73,000 with Double A Concrete for the prep work being done at Weaver Park and the Park Street Playground for new playground equipment. Third, the council approved spending up to \$85,000 to relocate the water line for Interfor, located on Highway 36. The line is being moved to accommodate the turn lane project at the intersection of Highway 36 and Ben Hill Road that the Industrial Development Authority is working on to address safety issues with the increased truck traffic. A budget revision was also approved to accept the FEMA and GEMA grants which will be used for the purchasing of three generators: one for the Town Branch sewer plant, one for the water treatment plant on North Center Street and one that will be a mobile unit. City Manager **Comiskey** stated the council accounted for the 15 percent match they would have to put in for the grants when working on this year’s budget. Mayor Arnold stated the city will be paying roughly \$100,000 for a total investment of approximately \$562,160 and noted that was a good return on an investment.

Finally, Council member Patsy Perdue brought up the topic of the online article by Roadsnacks.com which designated Thomaston as the third worst community in Georgia. Perdue stated she was so upset by the article that she wanted to write something disputing the information in it, but added that she did not have to thanks to the wonderful column written by The Thomaston Times Editor Larry Stanford. Perdue encouraged anyone who had not read the column to check it out. The column can be found online on The Times’ website and Facebook page, or in the July 17th issue of The Times.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
July 31, 2015

Open letter to citizens of Thomaston

Author: Doug Head - Mayor Pro Tem

The purpose of this open letter is to express some of my thoughts on several issues that have gotten a lot of publicity lately. I have seen many comments both in the paper and on social media concerning numerous important topics that range from police and fire protection to the Lake Thomaston project. I'd like to hopefully provide some thoughts that will help people understand things a little better. Most of what has been said about the new Lake Thomaston project seems to center around the fact that there is not enough money to both protect the public and improve and develop parks. Second, I have seen and heard a great deal of misinformation. Last, I have heard it said a number of times that we on the City Council do not care. I would like for people to know that all of us on the council do care. I cannot imagine why anyone would want to do this job if they didn't care. We don't do this job for the \$204 pay check every month. I ran for this job in 2004 because I saw what the Mayor, Council and the City Manager had done and I supported the kind of vision they had. That same vision has gotten us to this point down the road and we should ask: Are we better? I say yes we are, but check for yourself. Here are the facts.

Despite the loss of 5,000 to 7,000 jobs:

* We have low property taxes in the city. Our city millage rate is lower now than it was in 2004. Your county and school taxes may be higher, but your city property taxes are lower unless the assessed value of your property has gone up.

* We have low electric rates – See the Georgia Public Service Commission Residential Rate Survey or go to Georgia Power's public site and see what your bill would be with Ga. Power compared to a city bill. On the commercial side, I am told that 4 of 5 businesses are the same or lower.

* We have the Greatest Generation Park and we are headed to better parks in the future. Yes, we are spending more on parks but it must be remembered that we have just taken over two of our city parks (Weaver in 2014 and Park Street a few years before) that had fallen into disrepair. This time next year you will see them being well cared for. The Greatest Generation Park has far exceeded most people's expectations. I feel Lake Thomaston will be a completely new and exciting opportunity, not only for city but for county residents and visitors from out of town.

* We have smaller government: If we hadn't cared, then in 2000 when the mills closed we would have taken the easy and typical path that government often takes; we would have done little. Instead, we responded to the closing of the mills and began to cut costs. If we had continued on course, we would currently need an additional \$1.5 million to \$2 million a year in our budget to operate. Instead, we made government smaller so that Total Expenditures in 2013 are less than they were in 2004 and the millage rate is lower than when Hays took office in 2004.

In addition to keeping costs down we have also built reserves as recommended by our CPA firm. Reserves are needed over time to do things like creating a financial standing that allowed us to refinance our debt at lower rates and save \$80K a year. Those reserves also allowed us to put

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

down money that led to GEFA (Georgia Environmental Finance Authority) loans of funding at a lower interest rate with substantial loan forgiveness.

What are the city's priorities?

Public Safety:

This is an issue of primary concern that we should always be reviewing to consider how we could provide the best public safety and attract the best candidates for employees. Regardless of the fact that we are ahead of many cities and the national average as far as staffing, I am not as concerned about them as I am about us. Public safety is a top priority for all of us. We can and will provide superior policing and fire protection. We are committed to public safety as a council and we take this responsibility very seriously.

Jobs and Industry:

We all, city and county, contribute to the effort to attract industry. The city continues to repair and upgrade our infrastructure which is important to attracting industry and to do things to improve the quality of life, like the parks. The Industrial Development Authority is the agency primarily charged with efforts to recruit industry and does what it can for our existing industry and businesses that have supported our community all these years. IDA Director, Kyle Fletcher, along with the IDA board are continually making the effort to do these things as well as maintaining contacts with Georgia Industry and Trade. But in the end it comes down to money and the options that money can afford. Our governments, city and county, should return to the dedication of a mil of tax to fund the IDA's efforts. That is how you would grow the effort to bring new jobs to Thomaston and Upson County.

Improving Infrastructure:

The City continues to improve infrastructure through repair and replacement of water and sewer. Just to let you know, we have:

- 99 miles of electric lines and 4 substations
- 60 miles of streets and 31 miles of sidewalks
- 80 miles of water lines, a water filter plant, 8 water tanks
- 67 miles of sewer lines and 2 treatment plants

When all that is added up it totals 337 miles of infrastructure.

Utilities:

So you ask if we have all of this why do we raise utility rates or ever propose a tax increase? The answer is because costs do rise over time and if you do not pass that cost along at some point, your savings will dry up and you will have to raise taxes more. Our utility funds are the businesses we run to provide services for our citizens and to provide revenue to cover the cost of services that are the very reasons people choose to live in a city.

Transparency:

I feel we are as open as anyone. We have public budget hearings over four meetings, some at lunch and some in the evening to try to accommodate schedules. Public and press are always invited. Over those days, we go through the entire budget, not necessarily in detail, but we have

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the detailed budget documents always available to the public. Also, the City Manager, the Mayor, and several of our council members make numerous talks during the year to various clubs and community groups and city hall always has an open-door policy to its citizens. And lastly, we put city news and information in our utility bills (“The Bugle”) that goes out to all our customers. I hope in the future we can have one or two public meetings during the year to talk about the “State of the City” and give citizens the ability to hear more information about the city and to ask questions.

In conclusion

All of these good things have come together because we do care and because we did the difficult work of growing our government smaller. These good things have come in large part because of the vision of Mayor Arnold and our City Manager, **Patrick Comiskey**, and the support of the council, as well as the vision of former Mayor Sam Brewton and councils before us.

We will never be where we want to be, but we have to think about a lot of things at one time. Police and fire protection, water and sewer and roads, taxes, utility rates, parks, and joint projects are just some of the balls we juggle. We do need to take a long hard look at where our staffing levels are with both police and fire and how to attract the best personnel. Additionally, we need to continue to support the IDA and their efforts to attract new industry and employers to town. We need to continue the very important work of supporting and doing what we can for our existing industry and businesses. Some people say that we are a welfare community. Some say we can’t do both – improve and develop parks and have adequate police and fire protection. That is simply not true. The planning and savings over the years make this possible. Some people have told me we are just a town of older people and we don’t need Lake Thomaston. But I see Thomaston and Upson County as more than that. I want the IDA to get that next great industry that will employ another 200-300 people. I want a future for this town. But if all you want is to give up, bunker in, and reduce taxes and utility fees and spend our savings, then I am afraid you may have already given up. I am not in that group and the council is not in that group. We want more for this town; we want a future for this town. A future of good and improved infrastructure, improved roads, beautiful parks and murals as well as good, well-staffed police and fire and an IDA properly funded to be able to make the best effort to attract industry. Your City Council will continue to work on the important things we need and continue to work on how we can improve Thomaston and serve the citizens of Thomaston because of one overriding reason – WE DO CARE. Doug Head is Mayor Pro Tem of Thomaston.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
July 9, 2015

City sets SPLOST goals

Author: Larry Stanford

With 12 proposed sewer line projects totaling more than \$21 million approved for the new six-year SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, and probably only getting about \$5 million for its portion of the one-cent tax, the Thomaston City Council is looking to get as much done as they have funds for.

At a called meeting on June 23, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** provided information to the council on the 12 proposed projects. They range in price from \$4.3 million for a project to continue to replace sewer line along Town Branch, run it to the sewer plant, tear down the current water department building and install a backwash tank there, and relocate Severn Trent to the armory, to \$300,000 to replace sewer lines on Meeks Terrace, Raines Terrace, and possibly Reeds Terrace.

In addition to not yet knowing what percentage of the SPLOST they could receive, **Comiskey** added that emergency work could also cut into the project list. The city manager noted that the way the ballot read during the last SPLOST vote in 2011, it left a way for the city to use sales tax funds for emergencies, and that proved insightful. “What in essence happened this last time was we woke up one morning and South Green Street had caved in, so we used some of our SPLOST money to replace that section of line,” **Comiskey** said. “We’ve gone out and had another situation behind Phillips Street. We went over and did that section of line. We’ve had sections that we found caved in or were beyond patching and have had to replace the line from manhole to manhole instead of patching bad lines. “If this turns out to be a six-year SPLOST, that is a long time,” he added. “We may have something that pops up a month after it starts, and we want to address that first, because we have to.”

The council unanimously approved the 12 projects for the SPLOST list. **Comiskey** said the next step will be for him to present their list to County Manager Jim Wheelless, and for the Board of Commissioners to then decide how they will divide up the SPLOST funds. “What will happen in essence is, the county does the SPLOST,” he said. “It is not like the joint projects, where we both sit down and work it out. They have the opportunity to sit down with us and work out a contract, and then we have input into what goes on the SPLOST list. The other option is they just say they are going to go ahead and do it, then there is a formula where we get a certain amount, which is what happened last time. It ended up with us getting approximately 25 percent of the SPLOST.”

Comiskey added that the SPLOST being proposed is six years, which they hope will generate \$20 million in revenue. If the city were to receive 25 percent again, that would be about \$5 million to work with. “Obviously we have more projects on here than we’ll have the money to do,” the city manager said. “If we’re lucky, we might be able to get through four or five, six or possibly seven projects. I would say that would be optimistic.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Council member Patsy Perdue noted that developing the list of projects shows residents what the city wants to do. “This shows the process that we’re taking to replace out all the stuff that we need to replace,” she said. “It’s like the oil filter commercial – you either pay now or you pay later.” Mayor Hays Arnold agreed, adding that this is what the city has been working on. “It’s exactly what we’ve been doing for years. It’s exactly what we told people we were doing,” Arnold said. “We’re not wavering from that. This is sewer work. This is what we said we would go for with the SPLOST, and this is exactly what we’re doing.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
June 26, 2015

New sewer, water lines approved

Author: Larry Stanford

Thomaston has been busy the last few years replacing aging water lines, and continues to do so, but the city is also working on replacing its sewer lines. At their last two meetings, the Thomaston City Council has approved more than \$5 million worth of sewer and water line replacement work. At their June 2 meeting, the council approved an expenditure of up to \$3.9 million to replace sewer lines along Town Branch and Avalon Road, approximately 7,000 feet. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** said the project actually came in under the estimated cost. “The engineering estimate was a little over \$3.4 million and he was just under \$3.4 million,” **Comiskey** said. “I’m asking council to authorize the expenditure of up to \$3.9 million for the engineering and sewer line work, and also the oversight work. We have a low bid of just under \$3.4 million, but want authorization of up to \$3.9 million to cover additional engineering and oversight contingency costs.” Mayor Hays Arnold noted it is always good when a project’s bid comes in closed to what was expected. “It is always more comfortable with that” he said. “This will be another major project going on in the community and it will benefit the community. We’re glad to be a part of making this possible.” At their June 16 meeting, the council also authorized **Comiskey** and City Attorney Joel Bentley to spend up to \$35,000 to negotiate for land easements for the Town Branch project.

At the June 2 meeting, the council also approved:

- Up to \$90,000 for design work on the next sewer line project. **Comiskey** said it will be a continuation of work on the Town Branch/Avalon Road project.
- Authorization to spend up to \$25,000 for work associated with replacing approximately 250 feet of sewer line under Mill Race Road.
- Authorization to spend up to \$25,000 for sewer line extension under A Street, near the Martha Mill Building.

At their June 16 meeting, the council approved a request from the city manager for approval of a Drinking Water Revolving Fund Resolution for establishing a loan with Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority. “The city is looking to do a revolving loan of \$2 million, **Comiskey** explained to the council. “The interest rate is 1.03 percent, and we’ll have \$500,000 forgiven if we spend the full amount. Plus, this is matching of the CDBG grant that we already having approval of, which is another \$500,000. This will be a continuation of the water line project which will involve the southeast section of Silvertown East Village. We’ll be able to eliminate old lines that have been leaking. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head stated with it being a \$2 million project, with \$500,000 being forgivable, and with a 1.03 interest rate, it is pretty incredible that type of deal is available. “It will help us accomplish a lot of things we need to do,” Head said. “This deal is historically pretty incredible.” The council also gave **Comiskey** approval to hire Allen Smith Consulting to put together a Fiscal Year 2016 Community Block Grant Application. This is for replacing water mains and connections in Silvertown West Village.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
June 13, 2015

City Awarded \$2M Loan - Thomaston will use loan to replace leaking water mains

Author: Larry Stanford

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) has awarded the City of Thomaston a \$2 million Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan. The loan will finance replacing more than two miles of existing leaking water mains within the Silvertown East Village. This project will also install new hydrants, valves, services lines, and meters. Thomaston will pay 1.03 percent interest on the 20-year loan, which includes principal forgiveness of up to \$500,000, if all loan funds are drawn. The loan qualifies for a reduced interest rate because it's an eligible water conservation project.

Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold credited City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** with getting the grant, and added they were lucky to get the reduced interest rate. "Over time, that will basically amount to another grant," Arnold said. "Those interest rates will not be around forever, and I think we can depend on that." "GEFA's water and sewer programs assist local governments with improving their environmental infrastructure. As part of the Drinking Water program, cities and counties can also receive affordable financing for water conservation projects," said GEFA Executive Director Kevin Clark. "I'd like to express appreciation to Gov. Deal, state Sen. John F. Kennedy and state Rep. Johnnie Caldwell Jr. for their support. The state's commitment to helping cities and counties finance infrastructure projects contributes greatly to improving Georgia's water resources."

The DWSRF, a federal loan program administered by GEFA, provides communities throughout Georgia with low-interest loans to fund water infrastructure projects that deliver safe, affordable drinking water. Eligible projects include a wide variety of public health or compliance related water supply projects. These projects conserve and improve water resources, and facilitate economic growth and development. Low-interest loans from this program are available up to \$25 million.

City Manager **Comiskey** stated that the city will be receiving contract documents from GEFA within the next month that will need the city council's approval "This is part of the Silvertown East Village, where we will be replacing our water lines on 4th, 5th, 6th, and Double C streets," **Comiskey** added. "We have a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant that will be part of this, and a \$500,000 loan forgiveness that will be part of that \$2 million that was identified. The balance at \$1.5 million will be at an interest rate of 1.03 percent, which is a very low interest rate."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times (GA)
March 28, 2015

Thomaston paying part of new 911 equipment

Author: Larry Stanford

The Thomaston City Council approved paying a portion of the costs for new 911 equipment for the 911 center. The action came at their first March meeting. Council member Gary Atwater was absent. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** requested the authorization of approval of purchase of the new equipment. He explained the cost will be shared between Thomaston and Upson County. “Basically, the current equipment was purchased around 2004,” **Comiskey** said. “Evidently, Sheriff Dan Kilgore and 911 Director Carl McKinney are concerned about whether they can get replacement parts, and they feel it is time to go ahead and venture forth with a new 911 system. “I’m asking council to authorize the city manager to enter into a contract to spend up to \$221,000 over five years for a new 911 system. We will be participating with the county based on our service delivery strategy, and Upson County will be sharing in the \$221,000.” Council member Patsy Perdue asked for clarification that the \$221,000 would be spent over a five-year period and would be paid by the city and county together. **Comiskey** said that is correct. “It would be a joint project with the city and county,” he said. Based on the schedule from EmergeTech, the first year would be \$149,500, and then the next four years would be \$17,500, \$18,000, and \$18,500. The percentage we pay each year is based on the property tax breakdown.”

Council member Don Greathouse asked where the funds would come from. The city manager replied that he and county manager Jim Wheelless will take a look at it, and if the funds cannot come from the current SPLOST account, that they will be part of joint projects budget for the next five years. Greathouse asked if residents pay a certain percentage of their telephone and cell phone bills for construction and operation costs of 911 centers. **Comiskey** stated they do, and based on what they are looking at, based on the joint projects budget, the city and county will pay for anything beyond that is not covered by those fees. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head asked if **Comiskey** had reviewed the proposal, and he said he has not. “My recommendation is based on accepting what Sheriff Kilgore, Mr. McKinney, and also IT Director Robert Haney have looked into the system and are recommending it,” **Comiskey** said. “I haven’t been involved in reviewing it myself personally, but those three are confident that this will meet the needs of the 911 center.

Perdue made a motion for the city to pay its percentage of the \$221,000 over a five-year period, sharing the costs with the county. Head seconded the motion. Prior to the vote, Perdue asked 911 Director Carl McKinney if he believes the new system will work for a while. He replied that he is. “The system that we have now is obsolete,” McKinney said. “The company that made it is not sure if they can get the parts to fix it. EmergeTech says their system will not become obsolete. Most systems last about five years, but they say theirs will go further. So hopefully we’ll have this new system for a while, at least until I retire,” he added laughingly. The vote was called and was 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times (GA)
March 20, 2015

City studying possibilities of police review committee

Author: Larry Stanford

Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold and City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** have launched a study of the possibility of having a Citizens Police Review Board. They are expected to provide the Thomaston City Council with a summary of their findings within the next 90 days.

The issue of a police review board first came up last summer during a series of public hearings concerning Thomaston Police Officer Philip Tobin and the tasing of a person in a local convenience store parking lot. Since then, numerous other complaints about Tobin have surfaced and both the Georgia Bureau of Investigations and Griffin Judicial Circuit District Attorney Scott Ballard's office have both conducted investigations. The GBI investigation has been completed, but D. A. Ballard's office is continuing its investigation.

At one of the hearings, Thomaston resident George Carreker said other cities have had success with a Citizens Police Review Board, and he suggested it might be helpful for Thomaston to have one, too. Mayor Arnold agreed to look into it. At a city council meeting in February, Carreker brought the issue back up, and Mayor Arnold said it would be put on the agenda for the next meeting on March 3. At that meeting, City Manager **Comiskey** said they are looking into it. "Mr. Carreker, Rev. Johnson, myself and the mayor had a meeting last week to talk about potential talking points for what a police review board would look like, and who might serve on it," **Comiskey** advised the council. "What we decided was the best bet is to go ahead and try to investigate this, come up with as much information as we can, and come back to the council within the next 90 days with a summary report as to what options the council may want to choose to enter into." Mayor Arnold assured Carreker and others in the audience that they would be kept in the loop. "As we receive the information, we'll be glad to share it with you, also," he said.

In other business, the City of Thomaston is reacquiring approximately 189 acres of land on Pobiddy Road that was to have been the site of a future landfill. At their March 3 meeting, the Thomaston City Council voted to purchase Upson County's portion of 30 acres at the site, and also voted to request the Thomaston-Upson Office Building Authority to transfer back 159 more acres at the site. Council member Gary Atwater was absent.

City Attorney Joel Bentley brought the issue to the council. "The City of Thomaston, along with Upson County, many years ago looked at a solid waste landfill," Bentley said. "It did not come to fruition. There were three tracts of land that were to be dedicated to the solid waste landfill. One tract that is of particular interest this evening is a tract of 30 acres that is jointly owned by the city and the county. There are two other tracts, one of 56 acres and the other of 103 acres, which are currently titled with the Thomaston-Upson Office Building Authority, and I'd like you to take two actions this evening. "We have been in negotiations for quite a while about how to handle the 30-acre tract jointly owned between the city and the county. The county has agreed to

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PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

sell its ½-undivided interest to the city for the sum of \$25,000. It would be sold on an ‘as is’ basis. My recommendation is that the city agree to purchase this property for \$25,000.

The second matter is since the landfill is a dead issue at this point, I recommend that you ask the Office Building Authority to transfer the other two tracts back to the City of Thomaston. “ Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head asked of the tracts are being used. Bentley stated that there may still be some yard waste that goes out there for further distribution.

City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** said the sale of the county’s portion to the city would mean one entity watching over the land instead of two. “There is some material out there, but this is a way to resolve the issue of who is going to take care of the property,” **Comiskey** said. “Instead of having two people, you’ll have one person responsible.”

Mayor Hays Arnold agreed. “The city manager and I visited the property and everything seemed to be in order,” the mayor said. “I would agree that the best way to handle it is with one person in control.” Mayor Pro Tem Head made a motion to approve \$25,000 for the purchase of Upson County’s interest in the 30-acre tract of land. Councilmember Patsy Perdue seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0. Head also made a motion to ask the Thomaston-Upson Office Building Authority to give back the 56-acre and 103-acre tracts of land the city had given them. Councilmember J. D. Stallings seconded the motion.

Mayor Arnold explained that the Office Building Authority was set up many years ago to help the city and county get low interest financing. He said the two tracts of land were needed as collateral when a bond issue was sponsored by the authority. Arnold added that the bond company the city uses now does not require such collateral. Bentley noted that are there are other tracts of city-owned property that are currently being held by the Office Building Authority, and at some point in the future, the city could also request that those properties be deeded back to the city. With no further discussion, the vote was called for and was 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 24, 2014

Thomaston Council approves \$32.8M budget for 2015
Budget includes water and sewer rate increases

Author: Ashley Biles

At a called meeting on Friday, December 19, the Thomaston City Council unanimously approved the city's 2015 budget at a grand total of \$32,885,555. The budget includes \$8,469,925 for the General Fund; \$5780,550 for the Water/Sewer; \$15,339,232 for Electric; \$1,165,848 for Sanitation; \$200,000 for Community Development; \$1.5 million for SPLOST funds; \$200,000 for CDBG (Community Development Block Grant); \$90,000 for LMIG (Local Maintenance Improvement Grant); \$20,000 for Law Enforcement; \$70,000 for Hotel/Motel tax and \$50,000 for the Greatest Generation Memorial Park. Also included is a 1 percent across the board raise for city employees, which has been standard for the past few years, and a water and sewerage rate increase. The increases are 23 cents per \$1,000 gallons for water, and 16 cents per 1,000 gallons for sewerage.

The 2015 budget is just over \$2 million more than that of 2014, however City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** stated the council is not projecting any increase in the millage rate for 2015. "Next August (2015) we won't be projecting an increase," said **Comiskey**. "Eventually we are going to need one though, as we've gone years without one. We are at a point where I don't see us being able to gain much more by reducing personnel." **Comiskey** added that hopefully things are beginning to look up in the community as there have been a lot of positive signs lately. He noted there has been an increase in the amount of sales taxes, showing citizens are spending more money locally, as well as several new small businesses are opening throughout town.

The city has several projects planned for 2015, including improvements to the Thomaston Police Department, improvements to local parks, water/sewer line replacement and milling and paving. Plans for the police department include the addition of an improved evidence room, an additional meeting room and additional offices. **Comiskey** stated David Albritton is doing preliminary plans for the expansion, which looks to extend the building into the parking lot. He noted the city hopes to have a final plan in place this winter and begin soliciting bids in the spring. This would hopefully allow for the project to be completed in the summer of 2015.

As for park improvements, there are several items on the list. The tennis courts at the Greatest Generation Memorial Park are slated to be given a make-over sometime next spring. According to **Comiskey**, the final bid packet has been put together and there are plans to begin bidding out the project in the spring when the weather is better. The city also has recently taken over the maintenance of the Park Street playground and Weaver Park. Some improvements have already taken place at Park Street with a new parking lot and work being done to the basketball courts. They have been painted and now have a fence around the perimeter to keep the basketball from rolling away anytime someone misses a shot. As for Weaver Park, **Comiskey** stated the first order of business is to replace the wall at the playground and do something with the building in

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the center of the park. However, currently it is undecided what the building will be used for and if the roof on the building will be repaired or if the building itself will be torn down.

Comiskey continued saying there are also plans to improve the tennis courts at Weaver Park and eventually work on adding some parking. “We want to do parking at some point, but replacing the water line on that street is part of the project. Unfortunately, by the time that comes up, there probably won’t be enough time to get the other (parking) in this year. So that will probably be a project for a future year.” The city is working on replacing the water and sewer lines around town, as the lines are very old and cause many problems. **Comiskey** noted one of the larger projects is upgrading the clarifier tanks at the Bell Creek Sewer Plant, which is roughly a \$600,000 project. “This will be a big improvement for our Bell Creek Sewer Plant,” said **Comiskey**. “The best way to help your sewer plant is by replacing your sewer lines. Also by replacing the water lines we are reducing the amount of water being lost through small leaks.” **Comiskey** continued saying by replacing the lines, the city is also increasing the capacity at both the water and sewer plants.

Finally, the city is also planning on doing over \$1 million in milling and paving this year, particularly in the Brookwood and Springdale neighborhoods. **Comiskey** stated the water and sewer lines have already been replaced in those neighborhoods and now is a good time to do the road work. “We try to let the new pipes sit a year so any issues will have already showed up,” said **Comiskey**. “Most of the settling should happen in the first year also. So hopefully (by waiting), when we mill and pave we won’t end up having little concave spots in five years.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
August 27, 2014

City taxes will remain the same
Council listens to residents, changes mind on 2 mill hike
Author: Ashley Biles

Many citizens in the community have stated lately that they wonder if the powers that be in local government actually listen to any concerns they have; especially when it comes to the property tax millage rate. Well, at a called meeting last Thursday, the Thomaston City Council assured the community that they do listen; by voting 4-0 to keep the millage rate at 3.84 mills, the same as last year. Council member Gary Atwater was not present at the meeting. According to Tax Commissioner Berry Cook, with this change city residents should see a 0.47 mills decrease on their tax bill this year if the county commissioners set their millage rate as proposed at 18.76 mills. This would put the combined rate in the city for state, school, county, city and joint projects at 35.36 as compared to 35.83 last year.

Mayor Hays Arnold opened the meeting by informing the crowd that filled the basement of the Thomaston-Upson Archives that things would be done differently at the meeting, with public comments being held until after the business at hand was finished. He continued, stating he wanted to take this time to speak from his heart to the citizens. “We had the question arise, if we actually listened to what people had to say, and I responded yes, that we did,” said Arnold. “I don’t know if you are aware of how seriously we all take that, but we are very serious about our love for and our interest in this community, as are each of you.”

Arnold continued stating the city has done some “pretty phenomenal things” in past years when it came to dealing with the worst financial scenario the city has faced since the Great Depression. He noted by being fiscally conservative, the city has been able to build reserves even in trying times. He made a recommendation to the council that the rate be left as it has for the past 13 years. Arnold also noted he had discussed the outcome of not having an increase with City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** and stated he was assured by **Comiskey** that he would be able to manage the city’s finances within the parameters set by the council.

Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head told the crowd the reason the council was proposing an increase was to help fund the significant challenges the city faces when it comes to maintaining the infrastructure. However, he noted the reason the council was able to not raise the millage rate was thanks to the incredible leadership of Mayor Arnold, **Comiskey** and those who preceded the current council. The rest of the council agreed and Councilmember Don Greathouse added that he felt this was the right move for the city to make. “We do have several continuous issues before us now, but we have to make the right decision and I think this is the right decision for this time, this day and this age. We are going to work together for the citizens because that is what our job is,” said Greathouse.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The crowd thanked the council for making the decision to not increase the millage rate and many stated they felt the right decision was made. “I think they did the right thing,” said Dennis Harris. “It is just the wrong time to be going up on taxes; people cannot afford it, especially those on fixed incomes. I think the pressure that people put on them (the city council) caused the change because I believe before it was a done deal.” “It just goes to show that good things can happen when citizens peacefully come together for a common goal,” added Tim Tucker.

Ritz Theatre owner Malcolm Neal stated he was especially thankful for the change, noting the tax increase would have put an even greater burden on the small business owners since it would be coupled with the utility rate increase that went into effect earlier this year. “This would have been a double whammy, which would have hurt everyone, especially the small business owners,” said Neal. “Most of us have only a small margin and an additional \$50 a month makes a big difference.” Neal went on to say he understood that citizens and businesses have moved out of town, therefore reducing the tax income, but noted that continuing to raise rates on those who are still here could cause them to have to leave as well. “I’m glad they could try to level things off at this point and not penalize those of us who are left. I’m glad they listened to the people and realized they can make it work,” said Neal.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
January 9, 2014

City approves budget amidst business outcry

Author: Ashley Biles

During a called meeting last Monday, the Thomaston City Council unanimously passed a budget for 2014 with a grand total of \$30,789,664 which includes \$5,885,900 for the general fund; \$5,215,050 for water; \$15,343,732 for electric and \$1,165,848 for sanitary, \$216,450 for Community Development; \$16,625 for law enforcement; \$151,400 for the Greatest Generation Memorial Park; \$2 million in SPLOST funds; \$70,000 for Hotel Motel tax; a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); and a \$179,659 Local Maintenance Improvement Grant (LMIG) . However, prior to the vote, the council received an earful from a group of small business owners concerning the forthcoming 6.5 percent increase in utility rates and the possibility of a two mill increase on the millage rate later on this year during the public hearing held prior to the meeting. Several citizens spoke stating the increases would create a financial hardship on their businesses, something they are unsure they will be able to survive.

Susan Erwin, who along with her husband Mike owns Sanders Supply in Thomaston, told the council that during the summer her utility bill is around \$900 a month and for a business that is already struggling, they will not be able to endure an increase in costs in utilities. She noted the couple wanted to stay in Thomaston, but had begun to think of moving their business to a more active business community and will heavily consider doing so with the increase in the rates. Mike Erwin added that he felt the possibility of a tax increase was also a terrible idea. “This county has seen negative growth for two decades. There is not any construction going on. People are moving out of this area and people are out of jobs,” said Erwin. “People in businesses like ours, when we are faced with process going up and other things we also have to realize we have to cut some places. And maybe you have done that, I don’t know. But I can tell you with negative growth, no construction, and people losing jobs, with you raising taxes, there are other businesses like ours that won’t survive that. People will move out of this county, further lowering your tax base and if you think that’s a positive thing, if you think that is the answer to things, then you are sadly mistaken.”

Ritz Theatre owner Malcolm Neal also spoke to the council during the public hearing and stated that the bill for electricity and water at the theatre often exceeds what the business brings in due to less people coming to the movies. He noted that the city offers tax benefits to new businesses coming into town, but that the businesses that are already here need help to stay here as well. “I’m just saying a bit more support from the city to the small businesses will go a long way,” said Neal. “When it comes to the utility rates, somehow if you have got the money in other resources or other ways rather than hit the local businesses and everybody who lives here, who are already struggling to stay in town and survive; then another percentage increase can amount to a lot of money.” Debbie Lord stated she had spoken with many businesses throughout the downtown area and numerous citizens who all said they will not be able to take another rate increase especially since the city raised utility rates both last year and the year before. She noted

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

many people will not be able to afford another hit and suggested the council use some of the money they have in the bank to offset the rising costs of electric and water rates. “You guys have \$13 million in the bank for your projects, you made \$700,000 off of the utilities last year; you don’t have to go up,” said Lord. “We’re not asking you to decrease anything, we are just saying leave it alone.” Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold told those in attendance that he knew what it was like to have to scratch to make a payroll and to pay the bills, but there is never a good time to have an increase of any sort. “As bad as I think of having to raise taxes and things of that sort, we find ourselves in a situation where we have got to do what we have to do to keep this community, to keep this city on a steady course,” said Arnold. “You’re talking about at the maximum month having a \$54 (monthly increase) on your utility bill. Is that \$54 the difference between you being able to make it or not make it in Thomaston?”

However, when asked how many people file for an extension on their utility bill each month, City Clerk Dennis Truitt stated he could not give an exact number, but there are ‘a lot’ each month. Even when filing for an extension, those citizens are still charged the \$25 late fee for not paying the bill on time. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** stated the city is pulling in less profit margins on the utilities than they did in the 90s and the electric bill for the city (which buys its power from MEAG) is projected to go up \$600,000. He stated that is a cost that has to be passed on to the citizens because the city has tried to keep costs down and reduce their margins, but it is no longer possible to do. He continued saying the city has cut their staff by one third since the closing of the mills in order to keep cost down and they have been taking money out of the bank to pay for things. However, he noted there are several projects that need to be done such as sewer line replacements and milling and paving of the roads once the lines are replaced. **Comiskey** stated the council is trying to do what they can to be good stewards for the community. After that comment, Lord asked if the city really felt they were being good stewards by adding a \$37,000 animal shelter to the bottom line when there is already a shelter in Upson County. To which **Comiskey** stated there is an agreement between the city and the county that a special tax district is supposed to be set up so no city businesses or residents will be taxed by the county when it comes to paying for the animal shelter. He continued saying having a shelter for the city will help to better manage the animals at the front end and they need to have a place to put an animal if it is picked up after the county shelter is closed. The city also already has their own Animal Control Officer.

Councilwoman Patsy Perdue noted she appreciated hearing everyone’s comments and stated she is also very concerned. She continued noting she did not want anyone to think the council was saying they were going to do something and they don’t really care how it affects anyone because that is not the truth. However, she stated while she respected the citizens opinion, she also asked they respect those of the city council. “I guess we just have a different way of looking at the way finances should be done,” said Perdue. “I wish there was a real easy answer, but they way we do our finances, I understand it, I agree with it. I wish during our work sessions we had folks come. We’ve had work sessions (on the budget); four of them and nobody came. I wish people had come and been able to hear the reasoning behind what’s happening.” After the public hearing, the council unanimously approved the 2014 budget with the aforementioned increases.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
July 16, 2013

Thomaston Council approves bond issue

Low rate on \$8.2 million bond refinance will save city \$1.3 million over 14 years

Author: Larry Stanford

By a 4-0 vote at a special called meeting Tuesday evening, the Thomaston City Council approved a bond ordinance authorizing the issuance of \$8.2 million City of Thomaston combined utilities revenue bonds. The bonds are being sold to refinance the city's earlier bond issue done in 2002 and will save the city approximately \$1.3 million over the 14-year life of the bonds. Earlier this year, the council had authorized City Attorney Joel Bentley and City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** to look into refinancing both the 2002 bonds and several GEFA loans the city has. It was estimated at that time that refinancing both the bonds and the loans would save the city approximately \$1.2 million over the life of the bonds. But Bentley said they found it was not feasible to include the GEFA loans in the new bond issue, so the bond issuance will actually be for less than they had initially thought, and actually save the city more than they had estimated.

The city had also initially indicated the bonds would be sold on the public market, but Brian Ubell, a representative of Robert W. Baird & Company, an investment firm in the Atlanta the city chose to use, said they found they could get a better deal selling the bonds to a bank. "The past month has been a very interesting one in the fixed income markets," said Ubell. "As we were getting ready to embark on a public sale, the feds made their comments on potentially tapering the purchase of securities in the open market. As a result, you saw treasury rates spike and in the Muni Market (Municipal Bond Market) you saw rates increase very quickly as well. That's in addition to a move from May to June to significantly higher rates then as well.

"Given that movement, we contacted several banks to &what kind of rate could be achieved in the public market. Capital One provided a rate of 2.5 percent. Three other banks I talked to were higher than that. Capital One agreed to hold their rate, again as the Treasury's rates moved higher. So we recommended going forward with that proposal. We were able to lock in that rate that day. A public sale would take four to five weeks from today. So you eliminate a month of interest rate risks in an environment where rates are moving higher very quickly. "If we were to do this as a public sale in today's market, the cost of funds would be about 2.95 percent," added Ubell. "The savings on the refinancing of the debt over 14 years would be just over \$900, 000, or about \$64, 000 a year. At the 2.5 percent rate (from Capital One), the gross savings over 14 years is \$1.285 million, or about \$90, 000 a year. So there is about a \$350, 000 advantage to the private placement deal as it is structured, and \$25, 000 a year through 2027. "I think we are in an instance where the public markets moved very quickly, and the bank markets did not move quite as quickly and we were able to secure a rate and keep that rate."

Mayor Hays Arnold noted that in 2002, the city had to purchase insurance to buy the rate down, and that it did not have to do that this time, which saved the city another \$137, 000. Ubell agreed, stating that if the bonds had been sold publicly, they might have had to purchase

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PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

insurance, but because the bonds were sold to a bank, no insurance was needed. Bentley added that the timing of the sale of the bonds necessitated the need for the called meeting. "So that we could close this transaction out before the rate lock expired necessitated that we have this meeting this evening," said Bentley. "Otherwise, we would have done this in a normal period of time. This is scheduled to close out August 5, which is a significantly shorter period of time than we had anticipated, because of Brian's hard work and **Patrick's** hard work."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
January 27, 2012

Verdict is ‘guilty’ for Richard Harville

Author: Sheila A. Marshall

Thomaston businessman Richard Harville was on Thursday morning convicted of a single count of theft by receiving. The trial before Judge W. Fletcher Sams began Monday morning in Upson County Superior Court, and the jury began deliberating Wednesday afternoon. The verdict was reached Thursday morning following less than five hours of deliberations. Testimony in Harville’s trial, in which he was charged with a single count of felony theft of services, included details of the business transactions that prosecutors alleged resulted in the City of Thomaston failing to receive payment of approximately \$473,000.

Prior to sentencing, Griffin Judicial Circuit Assistant District Attorney Heath English said, “I think the truth came out and we’re very satisfied that the city and citizens of Upson County will have an opportunity to not only receive the money that’s owed to them, but also let any who conducts business in Upson County or in the Griffin Judicial Circuit know if they have any intention to commit fraud or theft, they should beware because our citizens aren’t going to allow it and you’ll be held accountable.”

Before he announced Harville’s sentence, Judge Sams addressed the defendant, stating that there is currently a serious push for prison reform that includes increasing probationary sentencing for non-violent offenders. Sams also cited the fact that Harville has no prior criminal history, and also thanked him for his service to the country, which included the awarding of two Bronze Stars earned during the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. However, he then said despite these facts, the case against Harville also involved aggravating factors.

“Petty theft is one thing, but anything over \$500 is a felony,” Sams said in reference to the almost half million dollars in losses the City of Thomaston incurred. “The most aggravating thing about this case is that the victim is a governmental entity, so that means the true victims are the taxpaying citizens.” Sams then announced that he was sentencing allowable under the law – ten years – with four of those to be served in prison, followed by six years probation. Harville must also make full restitution to the City of Thomaston.

The case revolved around what authorities say was a “gentleman’s agreement” between Harville, owner of such corporations as the now defunct Agricycle and Zurich Industrial, and Thomaston City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** and Mayor Hayes Arnold. In direct testimony, Harville acknowledged he reached an agreement with city officials, which would allow him to distribute in the Thomaston sewer system leachates, collected from the Taylor County landfill. Under that contract, Zurich Industrial was to pay Thomaston 4.5 cents for each gallon subsequently distributed for treatment at the city waste water treatment facility, which was run by Southwest Water at the time. Zurich had a separate contract with the owners of the landfill in Taylor County

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

in which Zurich was paid 10 cents for each gallon it transported. While Harville did not dispute that the city is owed almost a half-million dollars, he categorically denied any criminal intent in the matter. Rather, he alleged it was changes in the process in which manifests were turned over to City of Thomaston representatives that resulted in the payment shortage. In cross examination by defense attorney Hale Almand, **Comiskey** acknowledged the city received a “substantial” amount of money as a result of this business agreement, while admitting he was not fully involved in the ensuing process. “From what I recall, Mr. Harville and (Southwest Water plant manager) Mr. Palmer were to discuss those issues,” he said. “To the best I recall, Mr. Palmer was responsible for providing the City of Thomaston with manifests.”

According to testimony from defense witness John Freed, Harville’s son-in-law, who was Zurich Industrial’s general manager from May 2008 to August 2009, manifest coordination was an ongoing problem. Due to changes at Southwest Water, Freed said Zurich drivers no longer had a specific location to leave manifests when leachates were distributed at the city’s wastewater facility. Therefore, rather than drivers leaving individual manifests at the time delivery was made, they would collect manifests in their trucks for approximately one week at a time prior to turning them in at the Zurich office in Taylor County. “Sometimes all the manifests didn’t make it into the office. It was fairly common that there would be a few loose manifests in the trucks,” Freed said, adding that he had no specific date for delivering manifests, identifying the criteria as “how big the stack was.”

Harville also alleged that mismanagement at Southwest Water, specifically on the part of Palmer and what Hale referred to as a slip-shod procedure, was responsible for the billing errors that resulted in the city of Thomaston’s payment losses. When specifically asked to address allegations regarding Palmer’s job performance that could have contributed to the errors, **Comiskey** said, “He was a Southwest Water employee; I never saw the file.” However, the City Manager later acknowledged that Palmer was relieved from his job following his own reports to Southwest Water officials. “My communication with Southwest Water was that I had concerns about his performance,” **Comiskey** said.

Despite this, prosecutor English built the state’s case upon an investigation into not only Zurich Industrial’s business records, but also those of Agricycle, which Harville concedes received almost \$400,000 from Zurich. However, the state’s contention was that Harville deliberately misled Thomaston officials with regard to the amount of leachates being disposed of locally and then used those funds to prop up the failing Agricycle in an attempt to sell the company for a profit.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
January 6, 2012

Council passes budget for 2012

Author: Larry Stanford

By a vote of 3-0, the Thomaston City Council approved the 2012 budget at a called meeting at noon on Friday, January 30, 2011. The budget total is \$32, 500, 023. Council member Patsy Perdue was out of town and Council member Gary Atwater could not get off from work for the meeting. Present were Council members Wallace Rhodes, Jim Richards, Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head, and Mayor Hays Arnold.

Mayor Arnold noted that because of the way the city operates with several different funds coming out of the budget, it may look like the budget is bigger than it actually is. "We have funds that are operated out of the budget, not necessarily just water and sewer, electric, streets, and so forth," Arnold said. "We break down every single thing we do, and they all show up in the budget. They could be grants that amount to millions of dollars. It makes the budget appear to be quite inflated when it is not. "In actuality, we're looking at a budget that has the same spending level we have five or six years ago. It is a pretty substantial reduction. And I would say that unless things make some form of a dramatic turn, of which I am certainly not aware, then I don't necessarily see things getting a lot better a lot faster." City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** added that the city is operating on the same amount of revenue it was receiving eight years ago.

"The summaries of our general property tax and general taxes -we are proposing just under \$3.2 million for 2012," **Comiskey** said. "In 2004 we had just over \$3.2 million. So we are basically operating on revenue that we had in 2004. That's the main bread and butter revenue for our general fund." Mayor Arnold thanked the city employees for doing their best to meet the budget last year. "We know that our department heads and our employees, each and every one of them, have been called upon to do more, and they've done it, stepped right up and done it," said the Mayor. "I'm very proud of the city employees for what they have done this past year and the leadership they have been given." The city held five public hearings on the budget, receiving relatively little comment on it, even though electric, water and sewer, and garbage rates will be increasing. Council member Wallace Rhodes stated the lack of comment on the budget indicates the citizens' satisfaction with what the city has done. "I think this is a vote of confidence for the city," said Rhodes. Council member Jim Richards made a motion to approve the budget. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head seconded the motion, and it was approved, 3-0.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
October 14, 2011

Thomaston Council approves \$1.5M for roads and sidewalks
Author: Larry Stanford

With the approval of the first budget revision of the year, the Thomaston City Council allocated funding for needed road and sidewalk work. The action came at their October 4 meeting. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** requested approval of the budget revision. "We're looking to do approximately \$1.5 million in paving and sidewalk replacement," **Comiskey** said. "It also accounts for the Highway 19 widening project. We're looking to have to move our electric utilities, and we've allocated \$150, 000 toward that project." **Comiskey** said after the meeting that \$739, 000 will come from reserves, \$500, 000 from the capital replacement account, and \$187, 000 from the city's contingency fund.

Mayor Hays Arnold translated the cost of the work to how much street and sidewalk paving will be done. "To put that into reality for some folks, that's about five miles or so of streets that we're looking to resurface in Thomaston, and about three miles of sidewalks," said the Mayor. "I want to commend Mr. **Comiskey** again for the financial management that he has given us during his tenure," Mayor Arnold added. "The fact that there has been very strong financial management in this community is the reason that we are to do things we are able to do right now, and I appreciate that." With no further discussion, Council member Patsy Perdue made a motion to approve the budget revision. Council member Wallace Rhodes seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

In other business, the Council approved a change in policy related to paying off loans. **Comiskey** said they had originally talked about paying off the city's GEFA loans in order to receive federal stimulus money, but he said based on what the bond markets are doing, it may be better to hold onto the money at the moment. "What I'm recommending tonight is to keep those loans, and when our 2002 bond issue comes up next year with an option where we can buy down some of those bonds, we'll take these loan balances, which are \$2.3 million paid at 3 percent interest and we'll buy down some bonds that we would be paying 4.6 percent interest on," said **Comiskey**.

Mayor Arnold added that this has been an ongoing area of study for the city. "We feel that the bond markets being where they are at this given point in time, that this offers the greatest opportunity we'll have to make a significant difference in finance costs to our citizens," said Arnold. "We do have step up provisions in the older bond issue that enables the interest rate to kick up from time to time, after so many years. That is what we're facing at this point, and this will head that off and we should be about to get substantially better rates." Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head made a motion to approve the change in policy. Council member Gary Atwater seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

The council also approved an amendment to the zoning ordinance which will allow the use of and restrict Halfway Houses to M-1 Industrial Districts. The Thomaston Zoning Commission

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

voted last month to recommend amendment of the zoning ordinance. Council member Gary Atwater made a motion to approve the amendment. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0. Head motion, Atwater second, 4-0. City Clerk Dennis Truitt advised the Council that in accordance with the city's electric ordinance, the winter residential electric rates have been installed in the utility billing system, effective October 1. The winter rates will be effective October through May. Truitt added that also effective on October 1, the summer maximum sewer usage amount for residents has been removed. The summer maximum usage of 20, 000 gallons per month for billing sewer charges is effective April through September.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
April 26, 2011

City Manager Patrick Comiskey praised for service to city

Author: Larry Stanford

Nine years ago **Patrick Comiskey** moved to Thomaston and became its City Manager. At the Thomaston City Council meeting last week, Mayor Hays Arnold noted that anniversary. "I believe it was April nine years ago that Pat **Comiskey** came to Thomaston. The contribution that he has made to this community is incalculable," Mayor Arnold said. "I've had the privilege of working with him the entire time, as have several of you. He has been a Godsend for this community. "Again, some of you were here, and some of you were not here to understand and realize the situation that we faced 10 years ago. Pat has made it possible for us to not only survive, in my opinion, these times, but we have looked at a betterment of our bond rating, we have looked at a betterment in our financial condition in so much as it pertains to our reserve situation, we have witnessed and seen a betterment overall in the city's financial situation. "There are some things that neither Pat, nor any individual member of this council, nor I can have responsibility over or for -the loss of several thousand jobs in this community being one of those items. But to be able to take a situation that was as dire as it was and turn it into what it was turned into, in the face of all odds being against you, then I want to thank Pat right now." The Council and audience gave **Comiskey** a standing ovation.

In other business, the Council approved a tree removal bid for 42 trees in the Silvertown area. **Comiskey** advised the Council that Southtel was the low bidder with a lump sum proposal of \$20, 200, and recommended the city enter an agreement with Southtel. Council member Patsy Perdue stated she noticed some trees have had their tops removed, but were left standing. She asked if that was standing procedure. **Comiskey** replied that they will probably come back and finish taking the trees down, but he added that the city has a company that trims trees around electric lines that are also out cutting right now.

Council member Gary Atwater made a motion to accept South-Tel's bid. Council member Wallace Rhodes seconded the motion, and it was approved, 5-0. The Council also approved timber bids for parcels at Hannah's Mill Reservoir and Southview Cemetery. "We had Mr. Fred Whitaker help us to come up with some estimated tonnage figures and solicit some proposals," said **Comiskey**. "We have a total of seven proposals, and the high proposal was Resource Improvements Company for \$57, 616. That is an approximate figure, depending on the tonnage that is actually garnered once all the trees are removed. Mr. Whitaker has identified the trees that are being removed." (Editor's note: Unlike the first bid, in which the city is paying to have trees removed, the second bid is for companies wanting to come in and pay the city to harvest trees. The highest bidder will pay the city to remove the trees.) Council member Ed Bell made a motion for the City Manager to enter into a contract with Resource Improvements Company for the sale of timber at the estimated tonnage amount. Council member Atwater seconded the motion.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Council member Rhodes questioned whether the Hannah's Mill Reservoir property includes the tract of land the city purchased from the Hightower estate. **Comiskey** said there are some trees on that property, and that the trees have been marked for selective harvest. Rhodes also asked if the harvesting at Southview Cemetery will be a clear cutting in some areas, or just removal of certain trees. **Comiskey** said it will just be the removal of the mature timber in the area, but will not be clear cut like the city did several years ago. He said it will more of a thinning process. Rhodes asked if part of the area behind the Veterans Club is included. **Comiskey** said the creek behind the club is the property line, and selected trees on the city's property up to the creek will be removed. With no further questions, the vote was called and was 5-0 in favor.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
March 18, 2011

City Manager states why Thomaston chose not to participate

Editor's note: We asked Thomaston City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** to explain the city's reason for not wanting to participate in the Community of Opportunity program. He gave us the following press release on Tuesday. The City of Thomaston decided not to participate in the Community of Opportunity program for several reasons. Some of these reasons are presented in this article. These reasons have all been presented to the county government privately. We respond now, only because the county commission has made this a public issue and tried to give the public the false impression that the city is not cooperating in their effort to obtain grant money. First, citizens have been led to believe that this is a requirement to obtain a CDBG grant. It is not. It is merely an item added to give points toward an application. Citizens have also been led to believe that a community cannot obtain a CDBG grant in two consecutive years unless the community is a Community of Opportunity participant.

Thomaston is disproof of that statement. Thomaston received a \$500, 000 CDBG grant in 2009 and was awarded another \$500, 000 grant in 2010. Both grants are water or sewer infrastructure replacement or improvement projects. In fact, the City of Thomaston has been awarded more than \$4.3 million in grants in the past two years alone. Second, the county's objective for participating was to obtain a grant for Lincoln Park. We asked the county manager and chairman last September if they submitted a grant application in 2010 for Lincoln Park. The answer was no. Our recommendation was to submit an application and focus their time on the CDBG application and not on the Community of Opportunity Program.

Third, the city council prepared and approved a resolution supporting the county's effort to participate in the program as they requested. The council noted its own position of choosing not to participate itself in the program. The city does not have a need to participate in the program and is not interested in committing itself to a two year contract with a state agency. Fourth, this is not the first program created by a state government agency that the state agency has promoted and recruited participation. We need to first examine what programs we have already participated in before getting involved in a new program. A good example of a recent program was the entrepreneur friendly community program. We asked the chairman and manager to ask for input from the organizers and committee participants of that program for feedback. All such Atlanta-based programs have a list of requirements to complete, monthly reports to submit, and numerous committee meetings tying up local people and key staff. And finally, we recently expended tens of thousands of dollars on a comprehensive plan document, required by the state government; that involved numerous meetings and numerous hours of key staff over a two year period, with the result being a large binder full of plans, objectives and other support documents. We recommended to the county that we just follow the plan that we have and update it as needed.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 18, 2009

Council discusses budget revision at meeting

Author: Ashley Biles

The Mayor and City Council held their last meeting of the year this past Tuesday night. Among the items discussed was the approval of budget revision number four. The 2010 city budget will not include a tax increase, but City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** is suggesting an increase in water, sewage and electric rates. The proposed increases will be .30 cents per 1,000 gallons in water and .16 cents per 1,000 in sewage, which will bring in just over \$200,000 in revenue for the city.

Comiskey said that in the first quarter of 2009 industrial water use was down 55 percent from the previous year. He attributed the decrease to the closing of plants such as Yamaha and Royal Cord, and the fact industrial users are not using as much water as they once did. The increase in electric rate would be 2.5 percent for residential customers and 1.5 percent for commercial customers and will yield around \$160,000 in revenue for the city. **Comiskey** stated that MEAG, the main electrical supplier for the city, is raising its wholesale rates four percent over what it was this past year. However, even with the increase, the city's rates will still be among the lowest in Georgia.

In other business, the council voted to approve the renewal of the Cemetery Maintenance Agreement between the city of Thomaston and Ellington's Lawn Care. The agreement is for two years and will pay \$26.50 a month. The contract with Veolia Environmental Services will keep the price the same for the next three years. It also includes the addition of a recycling station next to the Gilmore Center for recycling of items such as newspapers and glass, at no extra cost. Council also approved the payment of the GEFA loan of \$1,020,000 and loan closing cost of \$68,000. The money from this loan has gone to pay for the city's sewer line project. Paying off the loan early has allowed the city to keep from raising water rates as high as GEFA would have imposed if it had not been paid off by the end of the year. **Comiskey** said that the loan should be paid off by the end of the week.

A uniform service agreement with Cintas, was also approved Tuesday night. The company had the lowest proposal cost of \$178.25 for a weekly rate. The city will be saving around \$4,000 with the new agreement, moving from \$14,400 to just under \$10,000 in total yearly cost for the services. The agreement also offered higher grade uniforms for the electric department. City Council member Wallace Rhodes commended **Comiskey** on his hard work on this contract as well as others. "He has done a great job on everything," said Rhodes. The city will have four budget hearings over the next two weeks. The first two will be on Monday, Dec. 21 at 12 p.m. and 6 p.m. The next two will be on Dec. 30 at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. All hearings will be held in the City-County meeting room at the Government Complex.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
September 8, 2009

Thomaston prepared for economic crunch

Author: Ashley Biles

The current economic times are tough on everyone and the city of Thomaston is no exception. However, the city has been proactively taking steps to reduce their amount of cost since 2002. "Since Thomaston Mills and Martha Mills closed, we have been taking steps to reduce the size of city government, by working with fewer people and equipment," said City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**. In 2002 the city payroll was \$4, 076, 209 and by 2008 had been reduced to \$3, 619, 652, which equals out to be an 11.2 percent reduction. Every department in the city has been made smaller at some point, according to **Comiskey**.

One change the city has made in the budget was to reduce the cost of health insurance for employees. In 2002, insurance cost the city \$476, 792.75 and by 2008 it cost \$456, 919.63. However, the amount of coverage for city employees has increased since they are now working with a smaller staff. In order to help reduce its cost further, the city has lowered the amount of city vehicles used. "We were using over 100 vehicles and had cut it back to as low as 83. I think we have added a few since then, but we should still be under 90," said **Comiskey**.

In 2003, the city was able to cut back on the amount of mega watts it owned in the MEAG Power plant. Originally, Thomaston would have owned 7.4 mega watts, but that was cut in half to 3.4 mega watts, which saves roughly \$400, 00 a year in fixed cost. "With industries falling off times are tough and unfortunately we have had to constantly make cuts and figure out how to do things more efficiently and effectively. We have had to make the government smaller because the community has become smaller due to the loss of the mills," stated **Comiskey**.

Since the city has been reducing costs gradually, it has been able to create a couple of reserve accounts which can be drawn upon if the city is in dire need, such as if a tornado hits. "We try to make long range plans when making decisions," said **Comiskey**. "Right after the mills closed we started trying to figure out how to make changes. Everyone has been asked to take on more responsibility and everyone has stepped up and gotten the job done."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Macon Telegraph
September 7, 2008

For now, water grants for cities are gone

Author: S. Heather Duncan

In a year when Georgia has been weathering a historic drought and state legislators touted their new emphasis on water planning, a new program to expand local water supplies has evaporated in the state budget crunch. In March, the Legislature approved \$40 million for grants to local governments that wanted to build new reservoirs or expand existing ones, drill new wells, or create new connections between water systems. Gov. Sonny Perdue has announced that he is eliminating that funding as part of across-the-board cutbacks to offset a shortfall between the state budget and incoming revenue.

Virtually every state program is feeling the pressure, but few of them had received more political attention and fanfare this year than the need for water planning and increased water supply. The grant program was being administered by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority. In Middle Georgia, the city of Thomaston had applied for a grant to replace an old pump station that would help fill the city's new reservoir. Thomaston was one of the few cities in Middle Georgia that banned all outdoor watering for a while last year because of concerns that its water supply was dipping too low.

Thomaston has purchased the reservoir formerly used by the now-closed Thomaston Mills. The city is deepening the reservoir and building a higher dam that will enable it to hold more water, City Manager Pat **Comiskey** said. This would increase by 50 percent the amount of water available to the city with its existing Hannah's Mill Reservoir, he said. The \$6.6 million project was funded mostly by the city, but Thomaston was seeking a grant of about \$1.5 million from the state. Without the grant, the city will likely rely on an existing, old pump station to fill the new lake from a nearby stream, **Comiskey** said. This will probably take longer but can suffice as long as the pump holds up, he said. "We in Thomaston planned for our own needs," he said. "When the grant funding came up, we saw it as a great opportunity. ... But we certainly understand the economic situation."

Thomaston was one of 13 local governments that had applied for loans, and about 20 other applications were expected by the state when the grant program was suspended a few weeks ago, said GEFA spokesman Shane Hix. Local governments are being encouraged to seek state loans instead through a several other environmental authority programs that remain intact. Legislation creating the new grant program was co-sponsored by House Speaker Glenn Richardson, R-Hiram. His spokesman, Marshall Guest, said it's reasonable to cut new spending during a shortfall. He said Richardson is waiting to see the big picture when he looks at the entire midyear budget before deciding what course to pursue. "We hope the money will eventually be forthcoming," said Amy Henderson, public information manager for the Georgia Municipal Association. "The water crisis isn't going to go away."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Perdue press secretary Bert Brantley said the governor hopes to revive the popular grant program when revenues increase again. "But as you're looking to fill a \$1.6 billion hole, all options have to be on the table," he said. "Since there are still significant funds out there for local governments to tap into, we can save that money for other needs."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times (GA)
August 8, 2008

City Council close to millage rollback

Author: Lee Coleman

The year was 2001. That was the last time the Thomaston Mayor and City Council raised the millage rate on citizens. Tuesday night, the "roll back" streak continued when the Mayor and City Council unanimously approved a letter to be sent to County Tax Commissioner Berry Cook committing the city to a rollback of last year's millage rate of 3.68. The approved roll back will create a new millage rate of 3.62 mils, a 1.7 percent drop from last year.

"Because of the timeline, Mr. Berry Cook wanted us to give him a letter committing to the rollback," explained City Manager Pat **Comiskey**. "What I'm asking council to do is approve the letter for the county tax commissioner to go ahead and put the city down for a rollback in 2008. "We can't officially approve the rollback until the next city council meeting." Councilman Wallace Rhodes was quick to make a motion to approve the letter, saying, "Mr. Mayor, the tax millage rollback is always good news so I'll be glad to make a motion to accept the rollback as proposed."

In further discussion, Councilman Ed Bell echoed the sentiments of Rhodes. " Mr. Mayor, I think its important to note that this is the fifth or sixth consecutive year we've had a rollback in our millage rate," he said. "That's attributed to the management of our city. I know the people appreciate that." Mayor Arnold, seizing the moment, thanked **Comiskey** for his efforts that in large part, amounted to the rollback. "I would like to thank **Mr. Comiskey**. The management style that we have appreciated with [**Patrick**] has been one of reviews of our budget on a regular basis," Arnold said. "He does not manage loosely and he does not manage occasionally. It is a constant management and I think this is one more testimony to the fact he does an outstanding job for the city and the citizens here. "We appreciate that Pat."

Although the economy locally has had a major impact on the collective community's pocketbook, Arnold said the rollback was a direct result of a cooperative effort. "I think its a testimony to great management," he noted. "I would applaud the city council for their cooperation and their support that they give management. "It has taken a team of pro's to do these things. This is the fifth or sixth year we've done this and I'm very, very pleased. "We owe every obligation to the citizens to examine both sides of the equation. That includes expenditures as well as trying to raise new revenues. "We have a strong belief we should approach the expenditure side of the equation and not rely totally on finding ways to increase additional revenue for the taxpayers."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
August 3, 2005

City plans to lower taxes
Council seeks two percent decrease in property taxes
Author: Sarah Morgan

Thomaston residents can expect their property taxes to decrease, thanks to a proposal made at Tuesday night's meeting. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** recommended a two percent decrease in the property tax millage rate to 3.83 mills. The millage rate last year was 3.92.

"I just want to thank our city manager for doing a diligent job, allowing us to make this proposal," said Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold. "He does a great job going over the budget and seeking out expense items. "It's refreshing to know that he looks at both columns and finds ways to make it balance out," said Arnold.

Council Member Ed Bell said that he is pleased that the city has been able to lower the rates two years in a row. "This shows the diligent effort made by the city to address the needs of our community," said Bell. "Each year, we are improving and that is a good thing." A public hearing will be held August 25 at noon to discuss the lowering of the millage rate. One mill is one-tenth of one percent of assessed property value.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
April 16, 2004

No Discrimination

With new job in sight, Lang to drop complaint

Author: Billy Vaughn

Thomaston Police Chief Frank Lang said this morning he is dropping a complaint he filed last October with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and admitted he now believes he was not discriminated against by the city manager as he alleged earlier. Lang, who has accepted a job as police chief in Moultrie, resigned at the end of the business day April 8, informing City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** his last day will be April 21. **Comiskey** said Thursday the city could begin advertising for a new police chief as soon as Monday.

The chief said he loves Thomaston and does not want to leave, but that friction between him and his superiors at City Hall made the decision inevitable. When asked about his EEOC complaint, the chief was reluctant to discuss details, but said, "I think I can say that it's over." "Actually (resigning) wasn't something that I wanted to do. I have come to a point of just loving Thomaston. It's one of the greatest small towns you could ever go to, visit or live in. In my mind, this is home. Certainly it is not something I was looking forward to doing, but in the end, I figured it would be best." "More than anything else, it was a career opportunity. I'm sure that the friction probably had something to do with it also. In life, everybody's not going to agree so therefore there will probably be friction wherever I go. The important thing is how we deal with it."

Asked directly if he was racially discriminated against by **Comiskey**, the chief admitted he "rushed to judgement" when filing the legal action. "There are often times that as managers, we're going to feel that a decision that could have an effect on a career, we might rush to judgement. Certainly at the time that I filed the complaint, it was my opinion that I was not being treated fairly. I now respect the city manager's decision to give me the letter of reprimand. It was his choice and I respect that."

Lang came to Thomaston to serve as assistant police chief in March 2000 and was promoted to chief 13 months later. **Comiskey** said the process for finding a replacement is moving forward. "We're in the process of preparing the advertisement and should have it ready within the next few days," the city manager said. **Comiskey** would not say how much the new police chief will be paid and said he and Mayor Hays Arnold are working to nail down a figure. "There will be a lot of factors that will have to be considered such as education and experience," **Comiskey** said. "We're hoping the job generates some interest and we'll say more about pay later when we decide that issue."

The city also has an opening for a police officer, utility lineman, firefighter and director of the city's Main Street director. About 15 people applied for the firefighter job before the application period closed last week. Applications for that job are being reviewed by Fire Chief Eddie Lifsey,

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

who over the next several days will put applicants through what is being called the "Combat Challenge." "It involves climbing and endurance tests," **Comiskey** said. "There is a lot involved, but I do know they will have to load and unload a hose and drag weight from one point to another." Lifsey was reportedly taking a vacation day yesterday, but was said to have spent much of the day in the South Green Street area painting fire hydrants.

For police officer, applications are being accepted until April 22 and as of yesterday afternoon, 22 people have applied for the job. The job pays \$11.78 an hour for a certified police officer and \$10.20 for someone who has not yet been to the police academy. Only six people so far have applied for the lineman's job, which offers a starting pay of \$17 an hour, but city officials say they will be accepting applications until June 17 for that job. Those interested in the Main Street director's job have until May 6 to have their applications turned in to the City Manager's office.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
February 9, 2004

City workers get pay raise; property owners won't see hike in taxes

Author: Billy Vaughn

Thomaston City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** last week unveiled a \$19.8 million budget for 2004 that not only calls for no tax increases, but includes new cars for the police department, a new building for the water and sewer department and a pay raise for city workers. **Comiskey** sat down with city council members in a 5:30 p.m. Feb. 5 work session to present his budget proposal - and won praise from Mayor Hays Arnold and council members for a job well done.

"The proposed budget for 2004 suggests no increase for property tax rates," **Comiskey** wrote in an executive summary. "The recommended budget allows for each city worker to receive a \$416 pay raise as calculated on a yearly basis. "The proposed budget does not identify an increase in garbage fees, electric rates or sewer rates. The only fee increase recommended is a modest 6-cent increase" per 1000 gallons of water.

According to the summary, the city experienced a drop in General Fund tax revenues again this year - a decrease of about \$250,000. "The City Council took aggressive steps in the second half of 2002 and in the year 2003 to reduce personnel costs," **Comiskey** wrote in his summary. "The council's aggressive action to cut costs reduced the personnel costs by more than \$500,000. The cost disparity would have risen to \$1 million had no action been taken."

Actual budget numbers have yet to be released as council members say the document is still in draft form. Council members say they will review the city manager's proposal, possibly suggest and approve amendments, and hold public hearings before the final document is approved.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
January 2, 2004

Officer says firing unfair

Author: Billy Vaughn

A white Thomaston police officer fired from his job last summer after flushing marijuana down a toilet at the police station claims in a U.S. District court lawsuit that African-American officers who committed "similar or more grievous conduct" remained on the job. Benjamin Thiel, who was employed at the local department from April 4, 2002 until July 16, 2003, is demanding his job back along with legal fees, back pay and punitive damages. Thiel filed a discrimination complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission nine days after being fired. The EEOC issued a "Right to Sue" letter shortly thereafter and on Nov. 25, Thiel filed suit in U.S. District Court. The city has yet to respond formally to Thiel's lawsuit and a trial date has yet to be set.

Thiel's firing centers around events of May 11 in what started out as a "routine traffic stop." According to the lawsuit, Thiel was dispatched to a call "in reference to people possibly throwing objects from a van." Thiel spotted and stopped the van, which contained six white males. Thiel "called patrolman Charlie Canady to provide backup support for the stop and subsequently obtained permission to search the suspects' van from the driver of the vehicle. The search yielded a small quantity of a leafy green substance, suspected to be marijuana. "Unable to determine who was in actual possession of the suspected contraband," Thiel "exercised his discretion and released the subjects with a verbal warning." Thiel "retained the suspected contraband and returned to the police station to seek guidance on the matter from his supervisor, Sgt. Paul Walker. According to the suit, Sgt. Walker instructed Thiel "to make his own decision regarding the handling of the evidence."

Thiel said he was told by Sgt. Walker that "small amounts of contraband seized in cases where no charges are brought should be destroyed" and claims he was "unaware of any published departmental policy regarding the handling of such evidence." With Officer Canady serving as a witness and with Walker just outside of the bathroom door, Thiel flushed the suspected marijuana. The matter was brought to the attention of Thomaston Police Chief Frank Lang who prompted the department's Office of Professional Standards (Internal Affairs) to begin an investigation into the incident. "The investigation resulted in the issuance of a termination notice ... citing departmental violations for neglect of duty, submission of reports, handling money and property, processing property and evidence and willful violation of departmental procedures and directives regarding the incident of May 11."

Thiel appealed the decision to City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** who, on July 3, upheld Lang's decision. In his lawsuit, Thiel claims that "prior to the appeal hearing ... Lang hired an African-American female" and assigned her Thiel's badge number. Furthermore, Thiel claims Chief Lang contacted the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council "seeking to have (Thiel's) ... peace officer certification revoked," which he claims was unfair retaliation.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

In his lawsuit, Thiel claims the following:

-Thiel, "through the course of multiple investigations into his alleged transgressions, was able to discover evidence where similar or more grievous conduct committed by African-American employees ... were not subjected to the same treatment."

-Sgt. Walker was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on the day Thiel was fired "in spite of the fact that Walker signed the incident report ... documenting the events of May 11 regarding the alleged policy violations with the evidence seized from the van."

-"Another employee ... Chester Sledge, an African-American male corporal ... received oral and written discipline for actions similar to the actions" resulting in Thiel's termination, "but the discipline administered to Sledge was different."

-"Another employee, Ricky Acey, an African-American male and lieutenant with the Thomaston Police Department received oral and written discipline for his actions comparable to plaintiff's actions, but Acey's treatment by defendants was different."

The lawsuit also points out Acey was fired Aug. 11, 2000 for "falsification of time records," but hired back in June 2001 and promoted to a higher rank. "Defendants have treated other African-American police officers more favorably in terms of discipline and other terms and conditions of employment."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 29, 2003

City responds to Lang's EEOC filing
Says 'no' to chief's claim of racial discrimination

Author: Billy Vaughn

The city's official response to Thomaston Police Chief Frank Lang's discrimination complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission not only denies discrimination existed, but paints a picture of a poorly-managed police department riddled with problems. Lang filed an EEOC complaint Oct. 17 alleging City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** had been racially harassing him and micromanaging the police department. The city denied Lang's accusations in a Nov. 10 one-inch-thick response, but the EEOC has yet to make a ruling as to whether a "Right to Sue" letter will be issued. "Since the hiring of **Patrick Comiskey**, city manager, in 2002, I have been subjected to racial harassment by him," read Lang's complaint. "I have also be subjected to disparate terms and conditions of employment which include being micro-managed by Mr. **Comiskey**. "In August, 2003, I complained to him if felt I was being discriminated against due to my race. On Oct. 8, 2003, I was given a written reprimand."

The city's response, prepared by the law firm of Adams, Barfield, Evans & Miller, strongly denies Lang's claims. (Editor's note: In such legal filings as EEOC complaints and responses, only one side of the issue is represented. The Thomaston Times has contacted Chief Frank Lang regarding his view of the city's response filing. He has declined an interview.) Following is a summary of the issues addressed by the city in response to the police chief's complaint.

Racial Discrimination Issue Chief Lang asserts in his complaint he was "micro-managed" by the city manager because of his race. The chief maintained he was unfairly disciplined and that he was subjected to "disparate terms and conditions of employment." The city denies the accusation. "The city has eight departments. The department heads of four of the departments are black and four are white. Attached to this response are letters from all three of the other black department heads and the black assistant superintendent of the Electric Department that the city manager does not over manage or micro-manage them. "Common sense would dictate that if the city manager's management actions relative to the police department were motivated by race, the other three black department heads would have been likewise treated and they were not. In fact, none of them have even received a single reprimand."

The Money Issue

"According to city leaders, problems between city administrators and the police chief began to surface when the city's financial condition became tight. "The mayor and council and the city manager had no choice but to work hard to reduce expenses, with a major focus on reducing payroll," according to the response. "A comparison in the number of personnel in the police department with the number in departments in 30 other cities revealed that Thomaston's department was far overstaffed. The efforts to rectify this has caused some friction."

"Lang asked during the summer about adding more staff and indicated that two additional police officer positions had been budgeted, according to the response. The city manager "told him that a

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

cursory review of the personnel line items for the police department indicated that the department was going to be over budget at year end if we added staff. "We ended the fiscal year with less than 46 people on the department staff and overspent on the salaries/wages and overtime line items by about \$12,382. The police department as a whole was over budget by approximately \$50,206." The city's response asserts that staffing in other departments had to be cut during the same time period. The response points out the Northside Fire Station had to be closed and the number of firefighters per shift had to be reduced from eight to six. **Comiskey** further said the staffing level of City Hall was reduced by two employees.

The Morale Issue

City leaders, in their response, said they had been receiving complaints that morale among the officers became low and, under the direction of **Comiskey**, corrective measures were taken. "The manager requested that the chief meet with patrol leader on ways to improve communications and morale," according to the response. "The manager stressed the importance of having the shift leaders eliminate negative talk and how critical it is for shift leaders to redirect or channel negative discussions encountered into positive ones. "The manager also directed the chief to set up a one-day retreat with officers with approximately a year of service. The retreat would include a team building exercise at Camp Thunder on the COPE course. The idea was to provide a listening and team spirit building session for the officers most at risk of leaving in the near future. But, according to the city, concerns about morale continued. "Police Department employees state that the morale problems within the department are due to poor management and partiality shown to a small group of officers," according to the response. "The concerns are that promotions, pay and disciplinary actions are based upon your standing with Chief Lang, and not upon merit."

Problems With Discipline

Comiskey reported he was concerned about high turnover in the department and complaints came from within asserting some officers were violating policies, but were not being disciplined. One officer was identified as being held to a different standard than others on the force. In regard to the officer, the response says "... no disciplinary action is taken against her unless there is outside pressure to do so." Another discipline issue cited by the city involved patrol officers getting reprimanded for not carrying out bank deposit escorts during their scheduled time off.

The Blue Car

"During a council meeting, discussions were had between council members and Chief Lang about the new cars the chief wanted to purchase. (Councilmember Ed) Bell specifically asked the chief whether any of the new cars were for him and he publicly replied no. "He, in fact, had a relatively new car at the time anyway. In fact, the chief ordered one of the cars in a light blue with the plan that it be his. When the blue car arrived, the chief had the Ford dealer arrange to have the factory AM/FM tape player removed and an AM/FM/CD player installed, and had the Ford dealer put it on the original invoice at \$315 for the blue car for the city to pay without consent of anyone. "The blue car never had any of the patrol equipment installed nor signs painted on it, and within a short time, it became the chief's car though he had told council publicly that the car was not for him, and upon inquiry, Chief Lang told the city manager and the

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

mayor that the CD player had been given to him by the Ford dealer, which in fact, was inaccurate."

Other Problems

There were complaints that officers were being asked to make non-emergency calls while off duty and allegations that officers "were playing softball rather than covering their zones." There were letters complaining that police failed to show for Neighborhood Crime Watch meetings in the community and officers were reprimanded for using their vehicles while off duty. "Affidavits of current and former officers," according to the response, "both black and white, including some of those who have resigned to accept other jobs, which demonstrate, among other things, that departures are the result of poor management of the police department." In the spring of 2002, city leaders say they became concerned about Lang's relationship with his patrol officers and the public.

The Public Image

"The city manager gave Chief Lang several directives in the spring of 2002. The first was to spend an afternoon each week on patrol with a different officer. The second was to spend an afternoon visiting with different business owners. The third was to establish an open office hour period, published in the paper, where any member of the public, city staff or police officer could stop in and see him without the need for an appointment. "These directives were tools to increase the chief's contact with patrol officers, business owners and the public. The chief was under regular criticism for maintaining his office time behind a locked door and not being accessible to the public or police officers. These measures were directed in order to increase the chief's visibility and popularity."

Lang wrote letters to the city manager "stating that his door is always open for his employees and the public," but that employees must respect a chain of command within the department. In another letter, Lang assured the city manager he "had ridden with most of the officers and had listened to their concerns, which he stated had to do with higher wages. "However, all of the officers interviewed stated that the hostile work environment and lack of leadership were their biggest concerns. Not one of the officers who gave affidavits even mentioned wages." Lang reported to **Comiskey** "he has implemented activities and programs to facilitate a closer working relationship among the officers and administration, and that he has made it possible for qualified personnel to compete for vacant positions. "A Sunshine Committee was formed to respond to medical developments and deaths involving employees and their families and that he has equipped the department with modern service weapons and communication devices to boost morale."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 8, 2003

City Budget Manager's goals:

Pay raises for employees, no insurance hike, no job layoffs

Author: Billy Vaughn

Thomaston City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** said though the city's fiscal year ends Dec. 31, it could be as late as February before a new municipal budget is approved. **Comiskey** also said while the city is strapped financially, his goal is to make sure the city's 115 or so employees get a pay raise next year. "I have three goals when it comes to the budget," the city manager said. "Those goals are to not lay anyone off, to keep insurance premiums stable while providing the same level of service and to help our employees get a little pay raise every year."

Comiskey said last week he has received budget proposals from "three or four" department heads, but said there is much work to be done before a draft of the budget is ready for review by Thomaston City Council members. He said once his budget draft is submitted to council, a series of work sessions will be held to hammer out the final numbers. "Once that process is complete, we'll have a better handle on where we stand," **Comiskey** said. "At this point, it's too early to really say what the new budget will look like."

Comiskey had hoped to be further along in the budget process and had originally planned to submit his proposal to City Council before the new fiscal year begins Jan. 1. "We've been dealing with some litigation for the last few weeks and that has put us behind insofar as the budget is concerned," said **Comiskey**. "We should be able to have the budget approved in about the same time frame as last year." Last year, the city's \$20 million budget was approved in February.

The litigation to which **Comiskey** refers is an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint filed last month by Thomaston Police Chief Frank Lang. Lang, in the complaint, asserted he was racially discriminated by **Comiskey** when the city manager unfairly micromanaged affairs of the police department. City officials in the last two weeks have been busy formulating a response to the police chief's complaint, which was submitted last week to the EEOC. City officials deny Lang's charges. The city manager said in the current fiscal year, taxes are expected to generate \$3,020,000, electricity sales are expected to bring in another \$9,465,000. Roughly \$3,220,000 is expected to come from water and sewer revenues.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
September 3, 2003

City tightens fiscal belt
Manager proposes spending cuts
Author: Billy Vaughn

Sweeping cuts in the city's budget were approved by Thomaston City Council members Tuesday night, saving the taxpayers close to \$200,000. Council members, working to avoid a tax increase, slashed dozens of departmental expenses while, at the same time, making some additions for needed projects. Though the city's property tax rate will not be officially set until next week, council has published its projected tax levy - which shows no increase over 2002. Last night, council members, in a single unanimous vote preceded by no debate, cut \$197,741 from the budget.

"Revenue franchise fees are down and sales tax (collections) are down, but we can make this work," said City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**, who recommended the cuts. "These line-item adjustments should put us in the black at the end of the year. That's what's important." Increases reflected in the budget changes total \$101,431 while cuts come to \$299,172. City leaders say in the last year, savings have become top priority out of necessity. For example, there's the fire truck issue.

"The Fire Department is in need of a new ladder truck and they have been given the go-ahead to look for a good pre-owned ladder truck," the city manager said. "There was a \$190,000 allotment for that." The purchase of the ladder truck will save the city property owners money in fire insurance costs. City leaders said buying a new ladder truck from the showroom floor would cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000, and praised **Comiskey** for his belt-tightening work. Said Mayor Pro Tem Hays Arnold, "Mr. **Comiskey** has done an absolutely phenomenal job in taking steps in what can at best be described as a poor economy to reduce the size of the bureaucracy."

Cuts approved by council were non-discriminating and affected every city department. Included in the three-page list of savings were \$18,308 to reduce health insurance benefits for council members and \$1,200 to raise council salaries each by \$1,200 per year. This change, as reported in The Thomaston Times, puts local officials more in line with state averages. Though personnel costs for other city employees were cut by \$5,000 in salary expenses and \$4,000 in health insurance benefits, **Comiskey** said this was reflected in a reduction of the number of city employees he called for earlier in the year. The number of employees in his own office was cut by two.

The city manager said making tough decisions was not easy, took a lot of work and was time consuming. He said he believes the changes were needed and worth it. **Comiskey** said he has discussed the cuts with department heads and said though all aren't pleased, "They understand

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the city's financial situation." The budget cuts are just the latest effort from city leaders to hold expenses down as council members prepare to meet Sept. 11 to set the city's millage rate. Additions to the city budget include an allotment of \$16,000 for cemetery improvement and \$10,000 for elections. Projected revenues for the city's utilities amount to just more than \$13.5 million and account for more than half of the city's \$20 million budget, according to figures supplied by **Comiskey**.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
February 5, 2003

No tax increase built into city's budget

Author: Amanda Nicewander

Thomaston City Council, for the first time in years, won't be borrowing money to operate the city in 2003 - a significant accomplishment for a government that suffered the theft of some \$2 million in recent years. Council unanimously adopted a budget Tuesday which reduces spending, raises fees for water and sewage rates and protects the earnings of the electrical department so future needs can be met. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** drew praise from council for his work on the budget - the first he has prepared for the city since being hired last April. It also was the most detailed budget council has been presented by a manager in recent history.

In addition to reducing spending in some key areas, the budget sets aside reserve funds to offset possible reductions in city revenue. "We hope to never spend as much as we budget," **Comiskey** said. "But we have to have enough to handle any unforeseen circumstances like a drop in sales tax. The good news for taxpayers is that we should be able to stick firm to our expectation of not raising property taxes in the fall."

Comiskey also said the savings will offset the city's need to transfer money from the electric fund into the general fund to cover costs, transfers which have added up to hundreds of thousands of dollars in previous years. "That's the biggest advantage to this year's budget," **Comiskey** said.

Protecting the earnings of the electric sales is important to the city. In the coming years Thomaston's share of construction of a new Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG) plant will rise to \$750,000. Setting profits aside now will help the city meet that responsibility without overburdening electric customers. As for borrowing money through tax anticipation notes, **Comiskey** said, "We want to get out of that cycle," **Comiskey** said, "so we don't have to pay fees and interest on those loans."

Highlights of the budget include:

• Council approved an ordinance raising water and sewer rates by 31 cents per thousand gallons, an increase which amounts to less than \$2 per month for the average household. City manager **Comiskey** said the increases were necessary in order to recover a deficit accrued by the water department each month. Last year the city transferred over \$100,000 from the electric fund to cover the debt. "We weren't recovering the costs for billing, collection and other necessary services," **Comiskey** said. "and those costs would have put us even further in debt this year. With the rate increase, the water fund can stand on its own and we won't have to subsidize it with electric funds."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Mayor Sam Brewton agreed, saying, "All utilities should pay their own way. The water and sewer department shouldn't be subsidized by electric users or property tax." The rate increase will take effect next month. Budget highlights include:

-More than \$100,000 was cut from the annual legal fee budget - a figure that rises to more than \$200,000 when actual spending is considered.

-\$12,000 was added to the general fund for sidewalk improvements in the city.

-\$7,000 was approved to repair or replace facings on traffic signs throughout the community.

-The city will have to pay \$15,000 more per year for liability insurance as premiums were increased this year.

-Money was set aside that will enable the city to match any grant funding that may become available for city projects.

-\$1000 was budgeted for the recognition of city employees throughout the year.

-\$3000 was budgeted for conferences and training for the city's new administration department. Three existing city employees were transferred to set up the new department.

-Over \$7,000 in additional funds were allocated for unemployment claims against the city.

-More was budgeted to cover costs of city elections.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
PATRICK CONWAY COMISKEY
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Patrick Comiskey** is listed below.]

Tampa Tribune, The (FL)
August 11, 1997

Applicants short on experience

Author: Bill Heery

SUMMARY: Applicants nationwide have applied for the assistant city manager job in Bartow, but few meet a key job requirement. Probably like many of the other applicants for the new post, advertised last month in state and national publications, the balmy Florida climate is part of the attraction.

Then there is **Patrick C. Comiskey** of Clarksburg, W.Va. A 1988 graduate of the University of Florida, **Comiskey** wants to be closer to his beloved Florida Gators.

Toland, administrator of the borough of Mountainside, N.J. -- population 6,600 -- and , manager of human resources and purchasing for the city of Clarksburg -- population 17,800, are among 33 people from 20 states who had applied for the job as of Friday. But like most of the other candidates, which carries a salary ranging from \$43,000 to \$48,000, they do not meet one of the primary requirements -- experience with a municipal electrical system.

Comiskey, 33, who was president of the Interfraternity Council at the University of Florida where he received a bachelor's degree before earning a master's degree in public administration from West Virginia University, said in a letter to DeLegge, "I am interested in continuing my career development under the leadership of a professional city manager. I am also a Gator interested in locating in Central Florida."

Comiskey, who has no experience in municipal utilities, said Friday that he did not know that DeLegge is an avid Gator fan.

Research Compiled by: Dallin Wassmer
 Colin Baenziger & Associates

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES
EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Section 11

Scott M. Moye

*Juno Beach Town Manager
Candidate Report*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
COVER LETTER AND RESUME	1
CANDIDATE INTRODUCTION	9
BACKGROUND CHECKS	17
CB&A REFERENCE NOTES	21
INTERNET SEARCH	33

Cover Letter and Resume

Scott M. Moye

2002 Hilliard Avenue
Waycross, Georgia 31503
912.288.3066
Moyescott3@gmail.com

October 10, 2024

Transmitted via email: Recruit28@cb-asso.com

Honorable Peggy Wheeler, Mayor
Vice Mayor Halpern, Councilmembers Davis, Hosta, & Rosengarten
c/o Mr. Colin Baenziger
Town of Juno Beach Florida
340 Ocean Drive
Town of Juno Beach, Florida 33408

RE: Candidate for Town Manager

Dear Mr. Baenziger:

It is with great enthusiasm that I send this letter formally expressing my interest in the Town Manager position with the Town of Juno Beach. I have also included my resume as required. I truly believe my experience and skills set will prove to be an asset to the Town of Juno Beach. Given my extensive background in governance, executive leadership, city and county management, I am confident my credentials align perfectly with your search.

Leveraging my education, and hands-on experience of regulatory, organizational and government management practices, I can contribute efficient, accurate and productive project results. Additionally, my unparalleled ability to establish and maintain cross-collaborative cultures among executive organizations and stakeholders has transformed me into a proactive change agent and mentor. My executive experiences bring calm, collected and educated decision making to the table and deliver problem solving strategies where everyone will benefit.

I am now at a personal and professional point where I am ready to find new challenges and opportunities, relocate, and continue my success. I believe that I can serve the Juno Beach Town Council, employees, and residents with distinction and ensure that the organization lives up to its values and mission statement, participate in achieving the strategic goals set by the Town Council and always meet or exceed the expectations established for the Town Manager.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss with you in person how my background and personality would make me the ideal candidate.

I greatly appreciate your consideration of my candidacy and look forward to your reply. If you have any questions or I can be of any service, please do not hesitate to call.

Very truly yours,

Scott M. Moye

Scott M. Moye

2002 Hilliard Avenue
Waycross, Georgia 31503
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email: moyescott3@gmail.com

Scott Morris Moye

SUMMARY QUALIFICATIONS

General

Management: Thirty-three (33) years of diversified, analytical and comprehensive managerial skills in both the public and private sectors. Managed multi-million dollar projects with a pre-allocated annual budgets of various sizes (\$1.2M - \$76M), and achieved directed and personal goals. Innovative, results-oriented leader in coordination of organizational efforts, including: goal setting, budgeting, employee motivation, labor relations, and human resources administration. Strong interpersonal relations skills and customer service ethic. Renewing ICMA Credential Manager certification

Finance: Proficient in the preparation and administration of organizational budgets and grants. Disciplined in strategic capital project budgeting.

Communications: Outstanding interpersonal skills. Very strong oral and written communication skills. Effective in fostering cooperative relationships with citizens, staff, elected officials, and the media.

Planning: Comprehensive understanding of land use, stormwater management, and community development issues, including building/zoning code enforcement.

Human Resources: Experience in recruitment, retention, training, and motivating staff.

EDUCATION

Georgia Southern University Master of Public Administration
Statesboro, Georgia

Georgia College Bachelor of Business Administration
Milledgeville, Georgia

University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute
Norman, Oklahoma

Georgia State University Certified Public Finance Manager (December 2024)
Atlanta, Georgia

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**County Manager**

August 2016 to October 2024
Ware County Board of Commissioners
Waycross, Georgia

Serve as the chief administrative officer for Ware County, Georgia and see that the ordinances, resolutions, and regulations of the Board of Commissioners and the laws of the State of Georgia are faithfully executed and enforced; exercise managerial authority and supervision over the County Manager's staff and 15 all department heads with 348 employees under the jurisdiction of the Board of Commissioners, including delegation of duties to subordinates without relieving burden of responsibility from the County Manager. Supervise the preparation, certification, and maintenance of county records such as: minutes of commission meetings; ordinances; agreements; personnel files; general correspondence; resolutions; contracts; and licenses.

Arrange appointments and screen calls for county commissioners. Provide background information, financial status updates, and policy recommendations to the Board of Commissioners to aid in making decisions. Monitor financial status of county, include preparing preliminary budget and compiling information from department heads relative to budget requests. Oversee general maintenance of county buildings and assure proper insurance coverage on building and vehicles. Correspond with the general public on requests for information and complaints

Serves as liaison for county commissioners and other County departments.

Departments Supervised: Administration, Assistant County Manager, County Clerk, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Public Works, Engineering, Planning & Codes, Vehicle Maintenance, E911, Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Fire & Rescue, Airport, Facilities Maintenance, Public Safety Training Center, Parks & Recreation, Media Services, and Senior Executive Assistant.

Procure-to-Pay (P2P) Operations Coordinator

May 2013 to August 2016
Mayo Clinic Health Systems
Waycross, Georgia

Manage all departmental facets of the P2P Supply Chain division of the Mayo Clinic Health System in Waycross, Georgia. Responsible for local contract administration for identified commodities and projects. Formulate analytical reports and Supply Expense updates to department and institutional leaders, customers and colleagues. Participate in selecting suppliers and continuing business relationships on the basis of the value analysis principal. Provide customer service related functions to all MCHS departments and customers. Collaborate with Sourcing and Contracting and committees to identify supply expense reduction opportunities.

Achievements: Implemented the first P2P division for MCHS Waycross. Developed and implemented the Travel/P-card system for MCHS Waycross. Assisted Mayo Clinic Florida staff with recognizing and implementing a \$2.5M annual expense savings for MCHS Waycross.

City Administrator

April 2004 to May 2013
City of Blackshear, Georgia
Blackshear, Georgia

Managed municipal government with a staff of 42 FTE's in a full-service southern Georgia community. Reported to a seven-member board elected by districts with mayor elected at-large from a community of 3,483 full-time residents. Managed the following departments: Public Works- Streets, Sanitation, Water/Sewer & Fleet Maintenance, Finance, Human Resources, Police, Fire, City Clerk, Information Technology, and Economic Development. Provided guidance and oversight with City's grant administration for community and economic development projects. Prepared and presented the annual City Budget and the Capital Improvement Plan totaling \$4.8 million. Served as the City Clerk and Treasurer.

Achievements: Served as the first city administrator for Blackshear. Spearheaded many administrative improvement projects such as Charter revisions, Land Development Code, and Code of Ordinances and city property tax collection agreement with Pierce County, industrial park infrastructure improvement project (water tower/water & sewer installation), information technology conversion for document imaging, council agenda packet structure.

Departments Supervised: Administration, City Clerk, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Public Works, Planning & Codes, Vehicle Maintenance, Police, Fire, Facilities Maintenance, & Parks, Water & Sewer Collection & Treatment, and Executive Assistant.

Adjunct Instructor

July 2006 to July 2018
Coastal Pines Technical College
Waycross Georgia

Provide instruction for Interpersonal Relations (Personal and Professional Development - EMPL 1000) in traditional classroom setting, online, and hybrid (BlackBoard). Provide advisement to students on human relations, employability, job search, and job advancement. Prepare and submit administrative documentation on students via Banner Web. Responsible for overall classroom instruction including: preparing lesson plans, maintaining department guidelines and standards, evaluating students by assigning grades and work ethic appraisals, and interacting with other faculty.

Deputy City Manager / Interim City Manager

July 2000 to February 2004
City of Fernandina Beach, Florida
Fernandina Beach, Florida

Assisted with managing full-service municipal government with a staff of 204 full-time employees in a Florida coastal resort community with a rich, historic heritage. Responsible for development and administration of a \$19.5 million operating budget and a \$76 million total budget, which included a \$25million capital budget and three enterprise funds. City operations include a municipal airport, an 18-hole golf course, and a marina. Reported to a 5-member City Commission, elected at-large from a

community population of 11,500 (20,000+ during the tourist season). Managed the following City Departments: Human Resources/Information Technology, Finance, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Marina, Golf, Airport, Fire, and Police. Oversaw operations in various City facilities which included: three recreation centers, two municipal pools, two fire stations, a police station, a wastewater facility, and a vehicle maintenance garage. City Manager office was responsible for management/maintenance of 8-miles of Atlantic Ocean beachfront.

Achievements: Completed addition to City Marina. Oversaw site-selection/development and financing of a state-of-the art City Police Station. Opened first phase of the City's 225-acre Greenway. Assisted with developing City newsletter to improve communications with City residents. Initiated facility beautification program. Developed City Mission and Core Values Statement. Initiated: City Wellness Program and City Employee Orientation Program. Initiated development of two waterfront parks, and the rehabilitation of another. Assisted CM developing weekly project-tracking and current events reports to keep the City Commission better apprised of important community happenings-continued as Interim. Initiated developer workshops to better explain land-use regulations to prospective land developers. Implemented an organization-wide information technology program (voice mail, computer network, Internet presence), which modernized organizational communications and provided better, more timely customer service. To improve service and streamline operations, conducted performance audits of City departments, and restructured departments based on audit findings. Served on committee to negotiated two successful employee bargaining unit contracts for Police and Fire Departments. Worked closely with community groups (downtown merchants, service clubs, etc.) on various civic projects. Initiated anti-crime coalition task force (composed of City Public Safety staff and city residents) to reduce crime and drug trafficking in the community. Served as interim city manager to transition to new city manager during a tumultuous period.

Departments Supervised: Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Public Works, Community Development, Police, Fire, Facilities Maintenance, Parks & Recreation, Marina, Airport, Golf (27 Holes), Water & Sewer Collection & Treatment, and Executive Assistant.

Assistant to County Manager

August 1993 to July 1998
Ware County Board of Commissioners
Waycross, Georgia

Provided assistance in county daily administration, financial forecasting/budgeting, local strategic planning, economic and community development, and project/grants management. Directed to manage daily activities and financial management for various County operations. Provided technical assistance to standing and formed committees of County/City, Chamber of Commerce, Waycross-Ware County Development Authority, and Okefenokee Area Development Authority with project management activities -- coordination, budgeting, administration, and consultation. Assisted Public Works Department with project concepts, designs, budgeting, facility development, and implementation in the areas of street and road improvements and paving, bridge replacement, and landfill operations.

Achievements: Coordinated and organized projects such as the Iron Bridge Road Landfill closure after 38 years. Successfully managed the capital project development and construction of the Tri-County Regional Landfill and Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA) projects which included concepts and design, funding applications, and administration to Federal and State

Assisted Departments Supervised: Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Public Works, Engineering, Planning & Codes, Vehicle Maintenance, E911, Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Fire & Rescue, Airport, Facilities Maintenance, Recreation, and Media Services.

Administrative & Financial Director

August 1988 - August 1993
Southeast Georgia Regional Development Center
Waycross, Georgia

Maintained sound administrative and financial policies and procedures in coordination with the Board of Directors of the Southeast Georgia Regional Development Center and Certified Development Corporation. Managed a regional commission staff of 45 FTE's in southeast Georgia to serve eight (8) counties and twenty-seven (27) cities. Provided technical assistance to local governments in all areas of general administration, financial management, economic development, and grant administration. Managed the Financial Management System of the SEGaRDC with a \$2.8M budget. Provided consultation to local governments in areas of data automation and processing, reviewed and recommended computer hardware and software proposals for various local government operations. Served as the administrator of the SEGaRDC Retirement Plan; maintain retirement system records; and serve as a member on the Trustee Committee. Ensured SEGaRDC complied with all federal, state, and local contracts.

Candidate Introduction

Section 11**SCOTT M. MOYE**

EDUCATION

- Master of Public Administration, Georgia Southern University
- Bachelor of Business Administration, Georgia College & State University
- Economic Development Institute, University of Oklahoma
- Certified Public Finance Manager (December 2024), Georgia State University

EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| • County Manager, Ware County Georgia | August 2016 – October 2024 |
| • Procure To Pay Operations Manager, Mayo Clinic | May 2013 – August 2016 |
| • City Administrator, City of Blackshear Georgia | April 2004 – May 2013 |
| • Adjunct Instructor, Coastal Pines Technical College
2018 | September 2005 – December |
| • Deputy City Manager / Interim City Manager
City of Fernandina Beach Florida | July 2000 – February 2004 |
| • Assistant to County Manager, Ware County Georgia | August 1993 – July 1998 |
| • Administrative & Financial Director
Southern Georgia Regional Commission | August 1988 – August 1993 |

BACKGROUND

I had the opportunity and privilege to serve as the County Manager of Ware County from August 8, 2016 to October 14, 2024 when I resigned. Ware County's population is approximately 36,000 and the only city in Ware County is the City of Waycross (population of approximately 14,000). Ware County serves as a major retail and commercial hub for eight counties in the southeast Georgia area, regional population of 185,000. The County has a day-time population of 65,000. The County also shares as the home of the Okefenokee Swamp. Ware County is 908 square miles and is the largest geographical county of all counties east of the Mississippi River. There are 452 miles of dirt roads and 265 miles of paved roads in the County. Ware County is located 75 miles northwest of Jacksonville Florida.

Ware County's economy is mostly agriculture but has a good diversified tax base of residential, commercial, and industrial. The County has 3 major State highways and US 1 which dissect the County and City into a pie configuration. Ware County is also home to CSX's largest major railcar classification system named Rice Yard, named after a former CEO.

Ware County's general fund budget is approximately \$27 million with a total budget of approximately \$48 million for FY 2025. The budget has multiple major funding sources such as

Section 11**SCOTT M. MOYE**

ad valorem taxes, sales taxes, special purpose local option sales taxes (SPLOST). The County has a SPLOST for general capital equipment items and another SPLOST for transportation projects. Ware County also owns and operates a regional airport, the only enterprise fund. The County is more focused currently on constructing transportation improvements such as road paving and drainage and building railroad overpasses in order to alleviate traffic congestion due to trains.

Ware County government has two divisions, administration and constitutional offices. The County has 248 employees which include employees working for constitutional officers. Fifteen departmental directors report directly to the Ware County Manager.

Ware County is currently experiencing three challenges:

1. Ware County has a few major challenges but the one that is top priority would be the construction of additional railroad overpasses (grade separations). These transportation projects are extremely expensive and time consuming from preliminary design to final construction. The State is currently constructing an overpass on US 1 North with a projected cost of \$60 million. The County and City are also designing an overpass with an estimated cost of \$25 million on a local street.
2. Another challenge facing Ware County also involves a transportation need. Being Ware County is the regional commercial and retail hub with the State highways and 125 trains navigating through, there is a tremendous need to begin the design of a perimeter road around the City of Waycross. This project will be impossible without the financial assistance of the State and federal government. The total estimated cost for the 32-mile perimeter road is approximately \$250 to \$300 million.
3. There is also an ongoing challenge with solving major drainage problems throughout the County as it is the headwaters of the Okefenokee. The water table is very close to the surface and the terrain is basically flat. Many transportation projects are expensive because they typically involve piping drainage systems in order to move water. Funding these projects is and has been a challenge for many years.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

Serving as the Ware County Manager has provided me with even more opportunities to be directly involved in providing technical expertise on many projects over the last eight years in the County and City of Waycross. The County population is very diverse as the population continues to grow in the County and in the southeast Georgia region. There is now more of an effort to promote and encourage economic and natural resources sustainability with promoting

Section 11**SCOTT M. MOYE**

innovative development opportunities. I worked closely with the Waycross Downtown Development Authority and the Waycross-Ware County Development Authority to provide guidance and support for projects to bolster the economy. This opportunity has allowed me to leverage my education and training, organizational and government management practices to contribute efficient, accurate and productive project results. My executive experiences bring calm, collected and educated decision making to the table and deliver problem solving strategies where everyone will benefit.

With the diversified experience I possess at various levels of municipal government, I have developed a demonstrated track record of building consensus and coalitions to achieve community goals. I understand the inherent challenges of development and service delivery in coastal/shoreline communities. I also pride myself in being a person with a high level of emotional intelligence, advanced interpersonal skills, and a collaborative management style.

Overall, I have had good working relationships with my staff over the years. There have been some problems with various issues but many were resolved with cooperation, open and clear discussions. I also made sure that staff could always talk to me or maybe I could go to visit them. I believe most would say that I worked with them as a team member and supporter. I try to seek to understand their perspectives, needs, and concerns. My management philosophy is to build a strong and competent staff, and I convey this foundation during staff meetings. I take the mindset of having trust and faith in staff until proven otherwise with accountability being in the forefront. We all must be accountable.

The elected officials I have served and worked with over the last thirty years have been generally polite, cordial, and professional. I have been successful in gaining respect overall with the elected officials by being transparent, forthright, and responsive. I would say most elected officials believe that I could advise them and community stakeholders of the pros and cons of a given course of action based on my professional training and experience. I am politically savvy but never political. I valued being a trusted advisor in my communications with the elected body as they deal with the many aspects of public policy.

Moreover, I believe my greatest strength that I bring to Juno Beach is being a skilled problem solver with excellent negotiation skills and a track record of innovative and entrepreneurial solutions. In addition, I have strong management and leadership skills, but I will be approachable, even-tempered, and maintain a calm demeanor. My experience with managing the City of Fernandina Beach has provided me with a philosophy of quality-of-life sustainability in planning, economic development and redevelopment. Protecting Juno Beach's unique character and quality of life for future generations will always be a priority.

Section 11**SCOTT M. MOYE**

On the flipside of my strengths, I would have to mention that I sometimes have a fault with delegating certain responsibilities. Throughout my diverse career, I've had to perform many duties alone primarily due to the lack of experience and training of staff and the importance of the matter. I set high expectations for myself; and I keep a sense of urgency with work responsibilities.

All throughout my career in management, I have searched for methods and measures to monitor processes and progress. Beginning in the early 2000s, I contracted with a private CPA firm to develop management reports I use weekly and monthly to monitor and track budget expenses and trends. Most of these are Excel formulated. These reports consist of spreadsheets with charts and tables. These are especially beneficial with managing enterprise funds to compare fixed and variable costs and revenue projections based on ad hoc scenarios.

In addition, I also track performance measures with incorporating management by objectives. Management by objectives is used to develop individual goals to support the organizational goals. These goals are discussed and documented during annual reviews with crucial input from employees. I also developed team goals for monitoring projects such as ones assigned to the public works department. In some cases, this helps me to determine if some projects should be completed in-house or contracted out.

My biggest achievement thus far would have to be a transportation project that was constructed to protect the health and safety of a large residential area of Ware County. This area of approximately 1,800 households was barricaded when trains were blocking four crossings into the area. We received numerous complaints from the citizens over many years and two citizens were unable to receive emergency care and died because of no access.

I led a staff team to explore ideas to create a solution. The County hired a private consulting firm in Atlanta to develop a feasibility study on various options to consider. Out of four alternatives, the consensus from the community was to extend an existing street in CSX right of way, build a 200-foot bridge across a creek, and connect to a street on the south side of the creek, all within CSX right of way.

During this time, County staff was in the process of creating a project budget for the upcoming Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) referendum for this project to be included. There were multiple challenges pertaining to this project, but the two major challenges pertain to obtaining authorization from CSX Transportation and obtaining a permit from the Army Corp of Engineers.

After the design was 80% complete, the plans were submitted to CSX in Jacksonville for review and comments. This process went on for about six to eight months, and the County was

Section 11**SCOTT M. MOYE**

eventually told that CSX would charge \$450,000 for a construction agreement to build in their right of way. I recommended building the new street and bridge further east out of CSX right of way which removed this additional cost and time for CSX authorization. The County also saved money with not having to purchase wetlands. The new design lowered the preliminary engineering estimate from \$6.5 million to roughly \$4 million. This amount included the design, right of way acquisition, utility relocation, legal, and construction costs. Staff was able to lower the budgeted cost in the SPLOST fund which enabled more transportation projects to be funded in other areas. This project took approximately three and a half years but it was the one I am most proud of.

I would have to say my biggest regret involves not being able to obtain consensus among the City and County elected officials to incorporate crucial transportation improvements in the Regional TSPLOST referendum. I and the County engineer wanted to begin the conceptual design and preliminary engineering for a perimeter road and one additional railroad overpass. Due to the high cost of these projects, the only funding source would have been including them in the Regional TSPLOST. The City and County will have to piecemeal these projects as funding becomes available.

My approach to facilitating open and transparent communication with the media is to be accessible and approachable. I have an open-door policy for anyone who needs to ask questions or obtain information. I believe it is very important to develop a solid rapport with the media because the media can be an asset for conducting municipal business. The citizens deserve to know what is happening in the community.

During my career, I've had the misfortune terminating employees for various reasons. I do not enjoy ending the employment of people. If there is a performance deficiency, I think it is important to develop a written corrective action plan to help and support the person to improve. In some other cases, typically employees terminate themselves for policy violations or a lack of fundamental work ethic expectations.

CHALLENGES FACING THE TOWN OF JUNO BEACH

I believe the greatest, most immediate challenge as town manager will be the issue of growth management and capital project and equipment funding. Growth management requires staff to be attentive to the community needs and balance this with the developer needs. The community plays a major role in the growth management practices of Juno Beach. The development growth cannot be stopped but it can be controlled if certain measures are taken correctly. The growth will be a challenge from the standpoint that some projects will test the limits of the LDC and will create a great deal of pushback from the community as it relates to over-crowding and density.

Section 11**SCOTT M. MOYE**

Politics always plays a part in this process and the balancing of all of this can and will be challenging.

Another challenge will be to explore funding sources for capital equipment and projects as the need arises. Costs continue to increase annually with providing quality services to the citizens. I will have to create an atmosphere among the departments to assist with being good stewards with public funds. Local governments are tasked with providing more and better services with less funding many times. Strategic budgeting and sound financial management are crucial for capital project planning in order to accomplish the goals set by the Town Council.

FIRST SIX MONTHS PLAN

In order to have a smooth transition during the first six months, I will begin reading and studying about the Town to learn as much as possible about the organization and the community. This time period will also be used to study documents such as the Comprehensive Plan/Local Development Code, Code of Ordinances, adopted budget, and current audit report.

For the first six months, I will be focused on meeting with the Council, staff, citizen groups (civic clubs), and State and Palm Beach County officials to gain insight on the community. This effort will give me a snapshot on current goals and directives. In addition, I will spend time understanding some current and past initiatives and projects. I will also meet frequently with the staff during this time to become more knowledgeable about the departments and find out what's working well and what is not. From a business standpoint, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

I truly believe I work well with the media in all aspects such as accurate and up to date information for the citizens. I like to provide periodic updates to the media on projects and events and sometimes provide informational pieces for publishing in the newspaper and radio.

I do not anticipate anyone contacting the Town with negative comments about me with the possible exception of a current appointed Commissioner who constantly interfered with operations and wanted to personally make a change in county management.

I think it is prudent to establish a work/life balance in order to avoid burnout which is very common as a municipal manager. In my leisure time, I enjoy reading, going to the beach, listening to music, home projects, and exercise.

Section 11**SCOTT M. MOYE**

ADJECTIVES/PHRASES THAT BEST DESCRIBE MYSELF

- Visionary, communication, mission driven, strong leadership
- Motivating
- Collaborative
- Persuasive, Enthusiastic & Approachable
- Servant, Openness, Honest

REASON FOR DEPARTING CURRENT POSITION

In this profession, municipal managers are well aware of when the political climate begins to change as it relates to the governing body. I worked for Ware County, my home county, for eight years and I felt it was the right time to seek new experiences and challenges in another community, preferably in Florida. I thoroughly enjoy the east coast of Florida and its beaches.

CURRENT / MOST RECENT SALARY

My final compensation as of October 14th with Ware County was \$140,000.00 with a vehicle provided for County business.

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
SCOTT MORRIS MOYE**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County	
Ware County, GA	No Records Found
Pierce County, GA	No Records Found
State	
Georgia	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County	
Ware County, GA	No Records Found
Pierce County, GA	No Records Found
Federal	
Georgia	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

Georgia	No Records Found
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Credit

Excellent

Personal Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Sex Offender Registry

Not Listed

Education

Confirmed

EmploymentConfirmed, except for Mayo Clinic
Health Systems (05/2013 – 08/2016)**Social Media**

Nothing of Concern Found

**Background Check Summary for
SCOTT MORRIS MOYE**

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
SCOTT MORRIS MOYE
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: SCOTT M. MOYE

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No
- 2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes No
- 3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes No
- 4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
- 5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
- 6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated, driving under the influence, operating a vehicle impaired, or a similar offense?
Yes No
- 7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No
- 8. Please list all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one.
- 9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No
- 10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

Attested to: 
Signature of Applicant

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moye

Anna Wall – Former County Clerk, Ware County, GA 912-614-6216

Ms. Wall has known Mr. Moye since 2017, when she took the position of County Clerk for Ware County, where Mr. Moye served as County Manager. She worked under Mr. Moye’s supervision until 2019, when she left the organization for another position. Ms. Wall characterizes Mr. Moye as an excellent Manager who is dependable, prompt, and fair.

Mr. Moye is a good supervisor. He is a great leader and goes out of his way to teach his employees. He spends a great deal of time working alongside his staff in the community. He also makes good hiring decisions.

Mr. Moye keeps his staff and colleagues informed of what is happening in his area of government as needed. However, he is also careful to keep confidential information private. He is cautious about who he shares information with and ensures it is only used for good.

Mr. Moye is quick to find solutions to problems, both short and long term. In Ware County, the railroads have an extensive network and a great deal of power. This sometimes has a negative impact on automobile transportation in the County. Ambulances often could not deliver patients to the hospital quickly enough when trains blocked intersections. Mr. Moye worked with the railroads and the community to plan alternate routes to ensure there is always an avenue for escape. On another occasion, after Hurricane Milton made landfall in October 2024, he worked tirelessly within the community to help with relief efforts. He identified those who needed assistance throughout the week-long period in which the community had no electricity. He reported the needs and secured assistance for residents.

Mr. Moye is active in the community. In addition to his regular responsibilities, he is active on other community boards. Even after resigning, he has continued to serve in these capacities. He has good relationships with members of the public. He is charming and intelligent, and he gets along well with people throughout the community.

Mr. Moye has great financial skills. He manages the yearly County budget. He meets with each Department Head to ensure that their budgets are ready for the upcoming year. He also manages the Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) and the Community SPLOST funds and decides how to use the money.

Mr. Moye has a positive attitude. He smiles, even during difficult situations. When he feels stressed, he does not show negative emotions. Instead, he reaches out to lift and help others.

Mr. Moye resigned from his position in the County. Ms. Wall does not know the details of the situation, but she is of the opinion that Mr. Moye is one of several people who have recently left the organization because of the negative work environment created by the current Chairman of the Board of Commissioners.

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moye

Ms. Wall is not aware of any controversy that has resulted from Mr. Moye's conduct or performance. Nothing in his background or conduct would concern an employer.

Words or phrases used to describe Scott Moye:

- Outgoing,
- Charming,
- Intelligent,
- Funny,
- Down to earth, and
- People person.

Strengths: Good teacher, great leader, builds good relationships.

Weaknesses: Needs to stand up for himself more, could fight harder for his own good ideas.

Steve Barnard – Former Commissioner, Ware County, GA 912-397-0293

Mr. Barnard has known Mr. Moye since 1998. They met when Mr. Barnard was serving as Deputy Sheriff and Mr. Moye was the Assistant to the County Manager in Ware County. They worked together again in 2016, when Mr. Moye became the Ware County Manager and Mr. Barnard was elected Commissioner. Mr. Barnard is very pleased with Mr. Moye's job performance. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the best performance possible, he would give Mr. Moye a 9.

Mr. Moye is a productive Manager. He powers through projects and makes sure his team is on track. When problems arise, he investigates to find solutions. He completes tasks in a timely manner.

Mr. Moye gets along well with his employees. He is good at solving personnel issues. On one occasion, he solved a problem involving an employee who was stealing time. When hiring personnel, Mr. Moye makes good decisions. He makes sure the chosen candidate will meet the needs of the organization.

Mr. Moye has excellent interpersonal skills. He gets along well with many people. He communicates clearly and keeps the Commissioners informed. When dealing with members of the public, he answers questions clearly and helps them whenever he can. He has good interactions during individual settings, and he also does a good job of conducting group meetings.

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moye

Mr. Moye has a good understanding of County finances. He can answer questions about the budget and sources of funding. If he does not immediately know the answer, he knows where to find the information.

Mr. Moye handles stress well. He does not become upset when he does not get his way. He does not keep negative emotions inside. He finds healthy outlets to relieve stress.

Mr. Moye has not been involved in any controversy to Mr. Barnard's knowledge. Nothing in his background or conduct would concern any reasonable person.

Mr. Barnard would hire Mr. Moye again without hesitation. He is knowledgeable about his local government management and is a great manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Scott Moye:

- Polite,
- Good performer,
- Courteous to the public,
- Knowledgeable about his job, and
- Keeps Commission informed.

Strengths: Skilled with computers, great interpersonal skills.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Carlos Nelson – Former Commissioner, Ware County, GA 912-722-3291

Mr. Nelson has known Mr. Moye since they were in elementary school. As adults, they worked together in 2016, when Mr. Nelson was a Commissioner for Ware County. Mr. Nelson and his fellow Commissioners hired Mr. Moye as County Manager. They continued working together until Mr. Nelson left the County government to work as an Election Supervisor in 2020. Mr. Nelson appreciates Mr. Moye for his hard work and his honesty.

Mr. Moye works very well with elected officials. He does a good job of navigating competing interests and helping them reach compromises. He also does a good job of keeping them informed of what is happening in his area of government.

Mr. Moye is a good boss. He often delegates tasks, and he trusts his employees to do their work. He does not seek attention and allows his staff to receive recognition for their work.

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moyer

Mr. Moyer makes great hiring decisions. He researches candidates and their backgrounds. He invites Commissioners to participate in interviews and give input. He selects the candidate who will be the best fit for the organization.

Mr. Moyer spends time in the community and regularly attends community meetings. He gets along well with members of the public, especially in group settings.

Mr. Moyer solves problems. Transportation is one of Ware County's greatest challenges. On one occasion, Mr. Moyer worked to plan the construction of a new overpass. He identified federal and state funding, secured support from the Commission and the public, and collaborated with railroad companies.

Mr. Moyer could improve on being an agent of change. While he does not resist change and often proposes new ideas, he does not fight for his proposals as much as he should.

Mr. Moyer has great financial skills. During his time in Ware County, he helped the organization achieve financial security. While he does not micromanage his employees' budgets, he provides oversight to make sure they are balanced and beneficial to the organization.

Mr. Moyer works well under pressure. He does not show signs of stress. His mood is rarely too high or too low. He has an even keeled personality.

Mr. Nelson believes Mr. Moyer resigned his position because of the current Board of Commissioners. The current Commission is unprofessional, impulsive, unpredictable, and difficult to work with. They have no direction or vision. They are overly concerned with doing certain projects for their friends, instead of considering the best interests of the residents and the organization.

Mr. Nelson is not aware of Mr. Moyer's involvement in any controversy. His background and conduct are appropriate for a person in local government management.

Mr. Moyer has done many good things for Ware County. He will make an excellent manager for another organization. Mr. Nelson recommends Mr. Moyer for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Scott Moyer:

- Professional,
- Detailed,
- Courteous,
- Timely,
- Honest, and
- Hard worker.

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moye

Strengths: Trustworthy, works well with Commissioners, navigates competing interests.

Weaknesses: Sometimes his willingness to compromise frustrates Commissioners. Could stand his ground more often.

Dale Wiley – Former Chairman, Downtown Waycross Development Authority, GA 912-218-8191

Mr. Wiley has known Mr. Moye since 2020. They met during Mr. Wiley's time as a member of the Downtown Waycross Development Authority (DWDA). Mr. Moye is also a patron of Mr. Wiley's local business.

Mr. Moye is receptive to change. He supports new businesses and aids them in establishing themselves in the community. Mr. Wiley appreciates Mr. Moye for his assistance when he was getting ready to open his business.

Mr. Moye spends time in the community. He attends many community events. He is friendly and approachable with residents, in both individual and group settings.

Mr. Moye solves problems. On one occasion, residents and business owners became upset about property tax increases. Mr. Moye calmed them down and answered their questions clearly. He stays calm under pressure. He does not become upset easily. He handles stress very well.

Mr. Moye has many other qualities that help him succeed. He has a reputation for being a good financial manager. He keeps colleagues and residents informed of what is happening in his area of government when needed. He also completes tasks in a timely manner.

Mr. Wiley heard about a controversial situation that resulted in Mr. Moye's resignation. However, he could not provide any details about the matter. Mr. Wiley is not aware of anything in Mr. Moye's background or conduct that would concern a citizen or an employer.

Mr. Moye is a great manager with the knowledge and skills to succeed. Mr. Wiley recommends him for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Scott Moye:

- Helpful,
- Knowledgeable,
- Friendly,
- Approachable, and
- Honest.

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moye

Strengths: Dedicated to his job, knowledgeable, helpful.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Jerry Pope - Commissioner, Ware County, GA 912-288-6319

Mr. Pope has known Mr. Moye since about 1996. At the time, Mr. Pope served as a County Commissioner, and Mr. Moye as Assistant to County Manager for Ware County. Mr. Moye left the position in 1998, but he returned to Ware County as County Manager in 2016. They worked together until 2024, when Mr. Moye resigned. Mr. Pope would rate Mr. Moye as being among the best Managers he has worked with.

Mr. Moye works well with elected officials. He keeps the Commissioners informed of what is happening in his area of government. He also maintains a relationship with neighboring local government officials and State officials. These relationships enable him to anticipate and adapt to changes within the State. He shares the information and ideas he gathers from his contacts with the Commissioners.

Mr. Moye does not fear change. He does not make changes unnecessarily, but he continually looks for better ways to manage the organization. He is open to ideas from his employees, Commissioners, and State officials. He thoroughly researches new ideas to ensure they will benefit the organization before implementing them. Mr. Moye was especially innovative during the process of planning two large road projects. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) refused to participate. Mr. Moye found a way around their regulations and got them involved. He was influential in persuading GDOT to help fund the projects.

Mr. Moye is a problem solver. In Ware County, the CSX Railroad owns a great deal of property. On several occasions, Mr. Moye has worked with the Railroad management to open right of ways on their property. He secured their permission to do paving and road maintenance on their right of ways.

Mr. Moye has satisfactory personnel management abilities. He does not micromanage his employees, but he follows up with them to ensure they have completed quality work. He spends much of his time in the office and could improve on spending more time working alongside his employees in the community. He has a great deal of experience in hiring personnel. He works with the Human Resources Director during the hiring process. He makes good hiring decisions.

Mr. Moye is active in the community. He attends community activities, goes to church, and participates in the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Waycross Development Authority. He is very good at dealing with members of the public, both one-on-one and in a group. He explains things in a way they can understand.

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moye

Mr. Moye has excellent financial abilities. He could easily serve as a financial director for a government organization. The Commission depends upon him to share and explain financial information.

Mr. Moye has no difficulty in managing stress. He relieves tension by staying active, as well as taking time to relax. He does not allow stress to prevent him from completing tasks in a timely manner.

Mr. Moye does a good job of managing routine controversies. He has not been involved in any controversy resulting from his conduct. Nothing in his background or conduct would concern a citizen or employer.

Mr. Moye is an excellent County Manager. Mr. Pope would gladly hire him for a local government or to manage his local business. He recommends him for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Scott Moye:

- Smart,
- Qualified,
- Open to suggestions, and
- Open-minded.

Strengths: Good relationships with the public, communicates clearly, works well with outside organizations.

Weaknesses: Takes on too much work. Could delegate more to his staff.

Kathryn Taylor – Vice Chairman, Downtown Waycross Development Authority, GA 912-282-3930

Ms. Taylor has known Mr. Moye for many years. As County Manager for Ware County, Mr. Moye regularly interacts with Ms. Taylor in her capacity as Vice Chairman of Downtown Waycross Development Authority (DWDA). Ms. Taylor characterizes Mr. Moye's performance as excellent.

Mr. Moye is a good boss. He motivates his employees and rallies them around the organization's vision. He also makes good hiring decisions.

Mr. Moye is innovative. During his time in Ware County, he helped the DWDA by identifying fundraising opportunities and assisting them in applying for grants. He has also proposed mutually beneficial solutions to problems involving the DWDA and other organizations.

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moye

Mr. Moye is a good communicator. He keeps his colleagues informed of what is happening in his area of government. He listens and responds to the Commissioners. He also has positive interactions with members of the public, both one-on-one and in a group.

Mr. Moye uses his communication skills to solve problems. He has many connections and knows how to use them. On one occasion, Ms. Taylor requested his assistance in contacting the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, who were not responding to her calls. Mr. Moye facilitated communication between the organizations. He identified and brought together the right people to help the DWDA complete a project.

Mr. Moye responds well to stress. He stays calm during tense situations. He does not display negative emotions during tumultuous meetings.

Mr. Moye has many other abilities that qualify him for the position. He spends time in the community and attends community meetings. He has great financial skills. He completes tasks in a timely manner.

Ms. Taylor has no knowledge of any controversy involving Mr. Moye. Nothing in his background or conduct would concern a citizen or an employer.

Mr. Moye is an excellent County Manager. Ms. Taylor recommends him for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Scott Moye:

- Level-headed,
- Thoughtful,
- Engaged with residents and officials,
- Forward thinker,
- Strong motivator, and
- Honorable.

Strengths: Works well with a variety of people, stays calm and solves problems.

Weaknesses: Overly concerned with being a peacemaker. Could be more firm and say “no” at times.

Leonard Burse - Commissioner, Ware County, GA 912-281-7196

Mr. Burse has known Mr. Moye since 2012. They were casually acquainted prior to working together. Mr. Burse became a Commissioner for Ware County in 2018, during Mr. Moye’s time as County Manager.

Reference Notes

Scott Morris Moye

Mr. Moye is a hard worker. He manages many projects and issues simultaneously. He works extra hours, even on weekends. He strives to ensure that everything in the organization has been done correctly.

Mr. Moye takes a balanced approach to leadership. He spends a great deal of time doing office work, which limits his engagement with employees. However, he also conducts meetings with Department Heads and seeks input from his staff. He involves them and informs them as much as possible.

Mr. Moye makes good decisions when hiring personnel. This task can be challenging because sometimes Commissioners get involved in the hiring process when they should not. Mr. Moye does his best to make fair and impartial decisions.

Mr. Moye is innovative and an agent of change. He is willing to accept change when it comes, especially when it will benefit the organization. He does research and proposes innovative ideas to the Commission, including grants they could apply for and solutions to problems. He pushes to update or replace antiquated processes.

Mr. Moye is a problem solver. In past years, the City of Waycross, the County seat, and its only incorporated municipality, managed its own recreation. At some point, the County took over the management of recreational services within the City. Residents of the inner city had difficulty traveling to the County's recreational facility because of its location across a major highway. Mr. Moye led the effort to restore control of recreation to the City. He compiled information on why it would benefit both the City and the County and presented it to the Commission.

Mr. Moye has a good relationship with elected officials. He is responsive and helpful to County Commissioners. He provides them with detailed information about multiple projects throughout the County. He also does a good job of keeping officials in the City of Waycross informed about County issues and projects. He encourages City officials to reach out to him in turn.

Mr. Moye spends time in the community. He engages with members of the public. Most residents know him and feel comfortable approaching them. He speaks to them on their level of understanding in a respectful manner. Mr. Moye attends community meetings, including meetings he is not required to attend. He attends many meetings involving transportation issues in the City of Waycross. He informs the Commissioners about the concerns expressed in these meetings, and he explains to the public what the County can and cannot do to help solve the problem.

Mr. Moye has great financial abilities. He oversees the budget with skill and helps the organization consistently produce a balanced budget. He is proactive in ensuring the organization has sufficient funding to complete projects.

Mr. Burse is not aware of Mr. Moye's involvement in any controversy. His background and conduct are appropriate for a person in his position.

Reference Notes Scott Morris Moye

Mr. Moye has done a great job for Ware County. Mr. Burse recommends him for the position of City or County Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Scott Moye:

- Dedicated to the job,
- Forward thinking,
- Conscious of needs in the community,
- Punctual,
- Good relationship with Commissioners, and
- Helpful.

Strengths: Good multitasker, keeps Commissioners informed.

Weaknesses: Could delegate more.

Elmer Thrift – Chairman, Board of Commissioners, Ware County, GA 912-548-7253

Mr. Thrift has known Mr. Moye since 2019. Mr. Moye was serving as County Manager when Mr. Thrift was elected a Commissioner for Ware County.

Mr. Moye leads his employees well. He also makes good hiring decisions. He does a good job of interviewing candidates and checking their backgrounds.

Mr. Moye is innovative. He finds better ways of managing processes within the organization. He strives to increase performance. He completes tasks in a timely manner.

Mr. Moye spends time in the community. He regularly attends community meetings. He has good relationships with members of the public and has many friends throughout the County.

The Board of Commissioners voted to replace Mr. Moye as County Manager. Some of the Commissioners had issues with Mr. Moye, which Mr. Thrift declined to discuss. The decision was political in nature and not a result of Mr. Moye's performance.

Mr. Thrift is not aware of any controversy involving Mr. Moye. Nothing in Mr. Moye's background would concern a citizen or an employer.

Mr. Moye is a good manager. He is well-qualified for the position.

Reference Notes
Scott Morris Moye

Words or phrases used to describe Scott Moye:

- Smart,
- Energetic,
- Kind,
- Pleasant, and
- Qualified.

Strengths: Intelligent, good financial skills.

Weaknesses: Could do better at keeping Commissioners informed.

Prepared by: Claire Argyle
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
October 23, 2024

Moye resigns as Ware County Manager

Author/Byline: Danny Bartlett

"I really don't want to make a comment. I want to close this career chapter and move on to the next." This is the only comment of former Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** after his resignation Monday, October 14 to the Ware County Commission. The resignation was given by **Moye** behind closed doors during a 2 V2-hour executive session. The 3-2 acceptance came after commissioners returned from the executive session and was handled as the last item during the October monthly meeting. Commissioner Timothy Lucas made the motion to accept the resignation reading from a prepared statement, "I have in my hand a motion to accept **Scott Moye**, the presiding County Manager at this time, his resignation effective today, October 14, 2024, to pay accumulated PTO (paid time off) and to provide insurance and salary until December 31, 2024." Commissioner Sammy Hendricks seconded the motion.

Commissioner Leonard Burse, clearly distraught, spoke up during the discussion period following Hendricks' second for the motion. "I don't think this will be a right move to accept the county manager's resignation in view of what it's predicated upon," said Burse. "I don't even want to vote to accept his resignation. **Scott Moye** has done a good job as county manager, and I think he would continue to do it. "I think a lot of times we get involved down into the mud of different things and just inundate him with a lot of things where he can't effectively do his job. This is something we need to think about long and hard. I just don't think this is the right decision to remove the county manager. "We have too many things that's going on in this county.

We have road projects going on, we have overpasses, we have key positions where people have already left. I just think this will be detrimental to the county if we make this move at this time." Voting to accept the resignation were Chairman Elmer Thrift, Lucas and Hendricks.

Commissioners Jerry Pope and Burse voted not to accept the resignation. After the vote. Thrift called for commissioner comments. Pope moved to adjourn, and got up to leave as Lucas seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned. Since Monday's meeting, commissioners have been asked why they voted the way they did and the responses varied. Thrift said he had "no comment" on the matter. Lucas said the manager submitted his resignation and rhetorically asked, "How can you make someone stay who wants to resign?" Hendricks said he thought it was the best thing to do stating, "All I did was accept a resignation." Pope said, "On advice of the county attorney (Jennifer Herzog), I have been directed not to say anything about the resignation of the county manager at this time." **Moye**, who had been working without a contract since August 2023, left Monday's session early, gathered his belongings, and left the building, clearly under duress. The Board of Commissioners had considered renewing **Moye's** contract since August 2023, but had not done so culminating in the action taken Monday night.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
October 2, 2024

Ware schools closed rest of week; city reschedules budget meeting

The fallout of the remnants of Hurricane Helene's trip through the area has cancelled school and scheduled city business in Ware County and Waycross, officials said Monday. Schools will be closed in Ware County the entire week, spokesperson Paige Coker said in a news release Monday afternoon. The release said the system would reassess the situation Friday, October 4 to determine if operations can resume Monday, October 7. The Waycross City Commission announced Sunday afternoon on social media and with a notice posted on the front door of City Hall commission meetings scheduled Monday and Tuesday were postponed until Monday-Tuesday, October 6-7. City Hall was scheduled to reopen today (Wednesday, October 2) if power had been restored in the downtown area. Ware County, along with the Pierce and Brantley school systems, announced last Wednesday they would be closed Thursday and Friday because of the storm. Both Pierce and Brantley are closed until further notice, their officials said Monday. The commission meetings were of particular importance as the city makes a third attempt at passing a budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25. City Manager Ulysses Rayford was scheduled to present the proposed \$42, 668 million financial sheet at Tuesday's regular business meeting. Monday was the commission's planning and information session.

After introduction next week, a public hearing on the budget has been scheduled at 3 p.m. Tuesday, October 15 ahead of the commission's meeting that evening. A vote on the ledger could take place at that time. The commission's first action on passing the budget died in June for lack of a second on a motion to pass. The second attempt in early August failed on a 2-1 vote with Commissioner Sheinita Bennett in favor and Commissioners Katrena Felder and Diane Hopkins opposed. The commission's composition, however, has changed since the earlier votes. District 5 Commissioner Alvin Nelson was returned to his seat last month by order of the Georgia Supreme Court. Nelson's appeal of the Ware County Superior Court ruling in the lawsuit brought by Henry Strickland challenging the results of the November 2023 election in which Nelson defeated Strickland is pending before the high court.

Also Monday, the Ware County Commission announced it had contracted with CrowderGulf Disaster Recovery & Debris Management to begin collection and disposal of storm debris. The action comes after the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) had issued a federal disaster declaration for Ware County to assist with Hurricane Helene recovery efforts.

County Manager **Scott Moye** said collection of debris should begin within the next week. The pickup involves only vegetative debris. It should be placed within the public right of way of the county road (edge of road) in an open area away from trees, fire hydrants, power lines, phone pedestals, natural gas lines, and other utility structures. No collection will occur on private property or state-owned rights of way.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
September 18, 2024

DOT says county will not lose TSPLOST funds to pave roads

Author/Byline: Danny Bartlett

Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** presented some unexpected news during the County Manager report at the end of the Monday, September 9, 2024, County Commission meeting. **Moye** contacted the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) about two projects on the Regional TSPLOST (Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) list to be paved.

The commission, during its last meeting, in a 3-2 vote (Chairman Elmer Thrift, Commissioners Timothy Lucas and Sammy Hendricks voted aye; Leonard Burse and Jerry Pope voted nay), approved using LMIG (Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant) funds from the next two years to go ahead and pave Thigpen Road and Gibbs Lane.

Moye reiterated he was under the impression projects could not be swapped once they were put on the Regional TSPLOST list and that if projects were completed by the time they came up for implementation, the funds allocated for those projects would be forfeited. In **Moye's** conversation, he found out the swapping information was correct, but the forfeiture of the funds was not. "We can be reimbursed," said **Moye** to the commissioners. "We have to document everything as if they were paying for it and it has to meet GDOT standards."

Moye has already turned in the application and the GDOT will send an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) for the commission to approve. "We document our costs for the file and when those projects come up in the system, then we turn in our documentation and they (GDOT) will reimburse the county," he said. This news was met with a huge collective sigh of relief as estimates were about \$2.5 million for the two projects. Now these two projects can be completed in a timelier manner and the costs will be recovered.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
June 19, 2024

County rescinds job offer to Niño - EMA director/fire chief must reapply for Pierce position

BLACKSHEAR - Santo Niño's job status is now in limbo. Pierce County's former Emergency Management Agency (EMA) director/fire chief had submitted his resignation to take a job as director of the James E. Blackburn Sr. Public Safety Training Center in Waycross. Niño's last day on the job in Blackshear was Thursday, June 13 and his first day on the job in Waycross was to have been Monday, June 17. The Waycross Journal-Herald learned Ware County rescinded the job offer at some point Thursday.

According to Ware County officials, they said they were not going to make a hire at this time. Attempts to reach Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** for further comment Monday were unsuccessful. Niño was placed on administrative leave with pay with Pierce County, but it is unclear whether he will be retained as EMA director/fire chief for Pierce County. "It's just been a crazy few days," Niño said. "I don't know what I'm going to do." Efforts to reach Pierce County officials for comment were unsuccessful. Niño said he was told he would have to re-apply for the position and go back through the hiring process. Niño has served as Pierce County's EMA director and fire chief the past five years. Prior to coming to Pierce County, he was with the Waycross Fire Department for 10 years attaining the rank of lieutenant. He was also the training coordinator for Ware County fire departments.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
June 15, 2024

Niño to head up Safety Training Center - Former Pierce Co. fire chief, EMA Director replaces Jesse Jordan

Author/Byline: Rick Nolte

The James E. Blackburn Sr. Public Safety Training Center in Ware County is getting a new director, and he's a familiar face to the area's first responders. Santo Niño, formerly Pierce County's Emergency Management Agency director/fire chief, begins work Monday, June 17 at the facility off Scapa Road. Niño, a former member of the Waycross Fire Department, has been in his Pierce County post the past five years. He replaces Jesse Jordan, who Niño retired last month after

...serving as director since the center opened in 2022. Waycross Fire Department Chief David Eddins said Niño was a perfect fit for the job. "It will be really good for us," Waycross Fire Department Chief David Eddins said. " (Niño) stays on top of training that's for sure. He's involved in everything, never misses a lick." Although happy in his Pierce County post, Niño said overseeing the training center's operation was something he felt he couldn't pass up. "I wasn't looking to go anywhere else, but this opportunity is a good one for me," he said. "Still, it is very hard to leave my Pierce County family and that's what we are - a family... "Looking back, this has been a good experience for me. Pierce County's people have been great to me."

Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** said the county was fortunate to be able to secure Niño to replace Jordan. Niño said he is extremely proud of the work the Pierce County fire and rescue volunteers and the EMA department has done over the past five years. The department had just 17 volunteers when Niño started and now has 68, all with certification as firefighters. Call volume increased from 440 calls in 2019 to 597 last year and is on pace to match or exceed that rate this year. Pierce County Commission Chairman Neal Bennett commended Niño's work in improving the county's fire departments. "We are very appreciative of Chief Niño's hard work and dedication to our Fire Department," Bennett said. The \$1.2 million training center is a state-of-the-art facility which is becoming a regional training site for fire and police departments as well as sheriff's offices all across southeast Georgia.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
October 12, 2022

Moye offers SPLOST info to Exchange Club

Author/Byline: Danny Bartlett

Scott Moye, County Manager for the Ware County Commission, was a guest speaker at the Waycross Exchange Club's weekly meeting Thursday. **Moye** spoke about the Special Local Option Sales Tax referendum that is included on the ballot for the General Election Tuesday, November 8. He also gave an update on the three big transportation plans for the county.

Moye said the SPLOST failed in 2020 and 2021 voting when sales tax had risen to 9 percent. Since then, the sales tax has been at 8%. He explained a TSPLOST tax of 1% will be retiring at the end of March, 2023 and if the SPLOST passes this time, it will not go into effect until April 1, 2023, leaving the sales tax at its current level of 8%.

The last two times the SPLOST was on the ballot the tax would have been 9 percent if passed. It failed both times. "Approximately 45% of the of the SPLOST proceeds are collected from visitors from outside the county," said **Moye**.

The informed those gathered the maximum amount that can be raised through the SPLOST is \$55 million. The SPLOST proceeds are divided between the county (60%) and the city (40%). One project dependent on SPLOST proceeds is a vehicular overpass across the railroad tracks near the intersection of Garlington Avenue and Albany Avenue. The U.S. 1 overpass project is completing preliminary design now and a constructability review should be completed this week.

The big news for citizens in the Jamestown community was a project slated to connect Winn Clay Drive with Tanner Lane, including a bridge over Kettle Creek. A Notice of Proceed has been issued and the site should be staked this week. **Moye** encouraged those in attendance to spread the word on the good things the county is planning to use the SPLOST funds for and encouraged them to get out the vote.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
July 16, 2022

Ware Commission handles variety of items at meetings

Author/Byline: Danny Bartlett

The Ware County Commission held a work session and its regular monthly meeting on Monday, July 11, 2022. During the work session, the commission considered several items of business, including a Swamp Road Paving Improvements bid, closure and relocation of the Roscoe Mixon Public Road, a Public Defender contract, an office space lease agreement with Action Pact, Inc., an airport entrance signage proposal, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Downtown Waycross Development Authority. Swamp Road Paving Chairman Elmer Thrift recused himself from discussion and voting on this proposal as Thrift Brothers was involved in the bidding process. After some discussion on whether this item could be brought up again, since in a previous meeting it was voted down, Ware County Attorney Jennifer Herzog said there was never a vote that ended the item, so it was placed on the agenda for the regular meeting. At the regular meeting, the bid from Allen Owens was accepted with a stipulation that the county engineer supervise and inspect the project, as needed. Roscoe Mixon Road Commissioners considered the relocation after hearing from Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** about what steps need to be taken to make this happen. Pastor David Bechiom explained why they were asking about this. Tommy Rouse has agreed to deed the necessary amount of land to the county to make it happen. Commissioners gave **Moye** the authority to proceed with the preliminary work and he will come back later with a full report and the paperwork necessary to make it happen. Public Defender **Moye** explained this is a continual project that is renewed every six months and is mandated by the State. The cost of the contract had an increase from

\$14, 440.18 to \$14, 914.67, an increase of \$474.49. The item was placed on the regular meeting agenda. During the regular meeting, the contract was accepted. Action Pact, Inc. **Moye** explained this is an annual agreement where the County leases office space at the Juvenile Court for Action Pact to use. Action Pact uses the space when court is in session as advocates for juveniles. Commissioner Leonard Burse recused himself as he is on the board of Action Pact. The item was placed on the regular meeting agenda. During the regular meeting, the agreement was accepted with Burse abstaining. Airport signage **Moye** explained the Waycross Ware County Development Authority is replacing some signs at the Industrial Park, and they wanted to know if the Commission would be interested in them developing a sign to match for the airport entrance. **Moye** said there is still some CARES money available to pay for the sign. The sign would cost \$24, 195. The item was placed on the regular meeting agenda. During the regular meeting, the proposal was accepted MOU with DWDA **Moye** explained this is an agreement to allow their director to be on the County's group insurance plan. There would be no cost to the County. The item was placed on the regular meeting agenda. During the regular meeting, the MOU was accepted. Commissioners clarified an item on the joint project list with Waycross for the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) the two have agreed to place on the ballot for the General Election in November. The county's portion of an overpass project is for vehicles on Albany

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Avenue while the city's is for pedestrians on Corridor Z at Garlington Avenue. The county portion will be a two-lane road. The county and city are seeking \$55 million over a six-year period. If approved, the one-cent sales tax referendum would take effect on April 1, 2023, after the TSPLOST expires on March 31. This would keep the county's current total retail sales tax at eight cents. The last two times the SPLOST was placed before the voters it failed. Those taxes, however, would have placed the level at nine cents.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
July 13, 2022

County unanimous in joining city on SPLOST

Author/Byline: Danny Bartlett

Ware County commissioners approved an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Waycross for the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax during a called meeting Thursday. Commissioners agreed during the July 7 session for the passage of the resolution to join the City of Waycross for the SPLOST to be placed on the November 2022 ballot. The one-cent SPLOST would begin April 2023 after the TSPLOST (Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) currently in place expires.

Commissioner Leonard Burse asked if there was a cap on the amount that could be collected. County Manager **Scott Moye** replied the length of the agreement would be six years and there is a \$55 million cap. **Moye** also said the total of the projects to be listed is less than the cap amount.

County Attorney Jennifer Herzog concurred explaining the cap is intentionally overestimated to be sure projects can be completed. Commissioner Timothy Lucas asked if the resolution would be voted on in November and asked for clarification of when it would begin. **Moye** replied "yes" to both inquiries and explained there would be no change to the current tax rate of 8 percent.

Burse sought clarification of two joint projects, Albany Avenue and Garlington Steet vehicle overpass. **Moye** replied preliminary work has already begun on those projects. Chairman Elmer Thrift asked for clarification that in both, the city and county, have agreed to finish both projects. **Moye** said "yes."

Commissioner Steve Pope sought clarification on the amount of funds to be spent on roads, overpass, bridges, road equipment, and drainage at a cost of \$30 million. **Moye** replied that, "yes, the bulk of the money is going to roads and streets." Commissioner Steve Barnard questioned the resolution not stipulating 60 percent of the funds raised will go to the county and 40 percent to the city.

Moye clarified that the 60-40 split is in the agreement itself and not in the resolution.

Lucas asked for clarification why the bridge project over Ossie Davis Parkway is not part of the resolution with Burse asking for clarification why the proposed Jamestown bridge also is not part of this resolution.

The county manager went on to explain that if a "dire emergency" arose, funds can be used to address that situation. After questions and concerns were addressed, Burse moved and Pope seconded that the resolution be approved. After the roll call vote was called, the motion passed unanimously. After the vote, Burse commented the commissioners and citizens get behind this

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

action to ensure the residents of both the city and county would benefit.

Thrift read the resolution and said it needed to put it on the ballot in November. Lucas said there are residents who mistakenly think if the SPLOST passes in November the tax would take effect immediately. He wanted to make sure everyone understands the tax will not go into effect until April after the TSPLOST expires. **Moye** was asked to explain the protocol again.

There was some discussion about what the county can and cannot do as far as promoting the tax. "Basically, the commission cannot ask residents to vote in favor, and county tax money cannot be spent to encourage a "yes" vote, but education on the benefits of the tax and what projects are proposed is allowable," explained **Moye**.

Lucas asked Tax Commissioner Roger Collins if he had any thoughts on the tax. He made the point many people from surrounding counties come to Waycross and Ware County to work and shop and help pay for the roads and infrastructure with this tax.

There was more discussion concerning how people outside the county help pay for the infrastructure through this tax.

After discussion was finished, Burse moved and Lucas seconded the resolution be approved as written. After the roll call, the resolution was approved unanimously. Thrift asked Collins to speak on the property taxes roll back. Collins explained preliminary notices have been sent. "We're in the appeal stage at this time," said Collins. "There will be changes before a final roll back or not will be offered."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
July 9, 2022 |

Caution advised for traveling Jamestown Road - County officials awaiting word from CSX for road repairs

Author/Byline: Myra Williams

Traffic is again moving along Jamestown Road, albeit the travel is rough with an uneven surface. The road was damaged by the early Thursday morning, June 30 train derailment of 19 rail cars. Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** said the road was milled last Saturday, July 2, and that more milling may have to take place before repairs can be done and the surface replaced.

"It's really rough, but drivers can go through," **Moye** said Thursday, July 7. "They just need to go really slow and use caution when riding on that portion of the road that was damaged." **Moye** said county officials are waiting to hear back from CSX about repairs to the roadway. "We hope to have it done within the next couple of weeks," he said. "We need to get the road finished and ready for the surface."

Moye added that more surface milling may have to be done to make sure the surface is smooth. The milling material is being stockpiled for use by the county on dirt roads and other places where fill is needed. The damage was caused by the cars that derailed about 3 a.m. Thursday, cutting into the roadway and creating a large area of destruction. Repairs are needed to an area from the intersection with U.S. 1 up a hill to a place just south of Blalock Road.

CSX worked feverishly to clear the accident and replace damaged rails on their main north/south line. Trains were back running the route early Friday morning, July 1. "We don't have any estimate of cost to make the repairs," **Moye** said. "I also don't have the square footage from the damaged area." A locomotive and 18 rail cars, including box and tanker cars, went off the track that runs parallel to Jamestown Road.

The road was closed for several days following the incident, but was reopened Monday, July 4. "We'll work hard to get the destroyed area repaired," said **Moye**, "but we urge all those using the Jamestown Road area to be extremely careful and drive very slowly. "We want to make sure everyone is safe in that area." No cause for the derailment has been released.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
July 2, 2022

Ware Commission condemns parcels for access roadway

Author/Byline: Myra Williams

Ware County commissioners moved one step closer to the construction of the Jamestown Subdivision Access Road Monday by approving a resolution for condemnation of two properties standing in the way. The resolution, offered during a public hearing, calls for the condemnation of the proposed property, one of which consists of .45 acres and the other .99 acres.

"These two tracts of property are needed to construct an access road to connect Tanner Lane and Winn Clay Drive," said County Manager **Scott Moye**.

Time was offered for anyone opposed to the action by the board, but no one voiced any opposition to the move. At the end of the public hearing, commissioners entered into a called meeting to take action on the matter. The resolution was unanimously approved by board members in attendance. Commissioner Jerry Pope was not present for the meeting. Chairman Elmer Thrift, Commissioner Timmy Lucas, Commissioner Steve Barnard and Commissioner Leonard Burse Jr. all voted in the affirmative.

Moye said the county will start advertising next week for 30 days and then roughly 30-40 days for awarding the bid and performance bid issuing. "We'll probably send the 'Notice to Proceed' to the contractor around mid-September and it will take 270 days to build the access road," **Moye** said. "Hopefully the contractor won't have any supply chain problems."

Commissioner Barnard suggested naming the bridge that's going across Kettle Creek in the area after former county commissioner Burton Carter, who worked hard to get the roadway prepared.

Moye pointed out Carter and Commissioner Barnard worked in tandem to get it done and that Carter also pushed hard for the State Street Overpass.

Burse noted the creation of the road is a "safety issue" to help give folks in the community a way to get out and in when trains are blocking the existing roadways. "This is an emergency road," said Burse.

Attorney Jennifer Herzog explained the resolution gives the commission an outline to condemn property and gives the board the authority to hire anyone needed to get the job done. Letters will go out to the property owners shortly.

"We had two properties that we were unable to resolve," Herzog noted. "Once it is filed with the court, Ware County takes ownership of the property and the project can move forward." It was pointed out the county already had appraisers go out and look at the property. The owners were offered the appraised price, but rejected it. "I hate that it's come to this, but it is for the good of

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

all," said Burse.

Moye also reminded the board a feasibility study was done in 2017 and four options were offered. One option was to build an overpass, one to build a road to connect with ABC Avenue, one to build a road farther north with an overpass and one to build a road at the end of Blaylock Avenue.

CSX Transportation was going to charge the county \$350, 000 to build alongside the tracks. CSX then decided not to allow the road to be built near the tracks. "This was our last option, our last resort, our only choice," said Burse. "Condemnation was the only way to get that road built." Following the vote, commissioners discussed the current negotiations with the city concerning disbursement of the one-cent Local Option Sales Tax.

The current split is 58 percent for the county and 42 percent for the city. After a 60-day period, mediations can be started. The LOST generates about \$8 million a year. The determined split has to be re-negotiated every 10 years. These monies are used to rollback property taxes or provide a credit against property taxes, said **Moye**.

"If it was not for the LOST, our millage would be a lot greater," said **Moye**. Burse pointed out the county has a lot more responsibility than the city. Barnard suggested leaving the split at 58-42 and send that to the city for approval. Church items deadline Friday Deadline for items for the Religion Page is 4 p.m. on the Friday before publication on Wednesday. Items may be emailed to church@wjhnews.com or delivered between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays to The Journal-Herald office at 311 Carswell Avenue. Announcements appear as space allows until out of date.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
May 14, 2022

County continues insurance program

Author/Byline: Myra Williams

In the year 2020, Ware County Commissioners elected to implement a "self-insured" system of health care for its employees in an effort to save money for the county and the workers. It was a good decision. "It was a really good year," John Leggett of Anthem Insurance told board members Monday during a work session held at the Ware County Administration Building. "And we expect no increase in claims this year. Employee premiums are staying the same."

In a regular meeting that followed the work session, commissioners voted to continue the self-insured process with Anthem and to move the dental and vision insurance to Anthem. A total of 230 employees from a possible 290 participate in the service. The anticipated amount from the County is \$3.9 million, an increase of \$65, 412 over current year or 1.4 percent increase.

"We have experienced a savings of approximately \$1 million by the end of June if numbers stay consistent," said County Manager **Scott Moye**. "We were fully funded, but we started the self-funded last year. Hopefully we can stay at this point."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
April 9, 2022

Volunteers key in fire services

Author/Byline: Myra Williams

Becoming a volunteer firefighter is one of the most rewarding and selfless decisions anyone can make, those who work with the responders say. Volunteer firefighters prevent and put out fires, and administer first aid within their communities. Today, volunteers make up about 50 percent of all active firefighters,

making it a great first step on the ladder to becoming a paid firefighter who makes his living serving others, officials say. Volunteer firefighters play a vital role in making a difference in the lives of their fellow man. In Brantley, Ware and Pierce counties, volunteer firefighters are the lifeblood of the fire service, many of them working fulltime jobs by day, then working for their community in the evenings and on weekends responding to emergencies that include fires, traffic accidents and medical emergencies. Ware County, which has 10 fully equipped fire stations - nine of them volunteer - has a large contingent of volunteer firefighters. "We always have a good turnout," said Ware Fire Chief Dee Meadows. "Of course, things have changed. The younger generation doesn't volunteer as much as the previous generations did. But we still have a good group that reports when they are needed." In addition to the fully staffed Fire Station I in the Waycross-Ware

Count Industrial Park, Ware County has nine other stations including Pebble Hill, Millwood, Southeast, Boggy Bay, Emerson Park, Waresboro, Pine Valley, Bickley, Manor. "Our numbers are maintained about the same and we've gained about 15 since I've been here," said Meadows. Bucky Goble, chief of the Blackshear Fire Service, said Pierce County is fully staffed with volunteers, that he keeps 20 to 22 on the roster at all times. "It depends on the time of day," said Goble. "We run automatic day and night, anything within five miles of the city limits. That's how we combat fires and emergencies." Volunteers in Pierce County go through the same training as a regular firefighter, they just do it in the county where they serve. "Some have state training which is basically the same, we just teach them here," said Goble.

"We have taken some over to Ware County to experience their burn building, but we have our own burn building in Pierce County." Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** said he greatly appreciates those who give of their time and dedicate their service to the community. "They are true public servants who dedicate their time and talents to the communities where they live. And these communities rely on the volunteers. It is a great calling," said **Moye**. "It works great, as far as the service is concerned. We have very active volunteer fire departments. Since COVID appears to be drifting away, "I'm hopeful we can get in more training for them. We were really homebound for a while but it appears to be changing. We also want to get more younger people involved." The duties of a volunteer firefighter span beyond putting out fires and rescuing animals from trees. In reality, volunteer firefighters perform a multitude of important tasks to keep others safe, maintain their equipment, and ensure the department can continue serving their

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

community. Volunteer firefighters respond to fire outbreaks in the same way as paid firefighters, although their involvement is usually secondary or in support of career firefighters. Some of their responsibilities include setting up ladders, connecting hoses to hydrants, spraying fires directly, and using methods to prevent fire spread. Volunteer firefighters often administer first aid or CPR to individuals hurt in fire, accidents, or other types of emergencies. Some volunteers receive training on basic life-support methods, while others rely on paid firefighters to administer these services. When an individual or group of people go missing or are in imminent danger, volunteers may participate in search and rescue efforts. These may take place in bodies of water, remote spaces, mountainous areas, or even urban settings. Volunteers usually work in teams to cover larger areas of ground in shorter amounts of time.

After the outbreak of a fire or in the aftermath of a large traffic wreck, volunteer firefighters step in to help reroute traffic, avoid pile-ups, and ensure that pedestrians, emergency staff, and drivers all follow safety procedures. They may direct traffic, set up barriers, or liaise with other firefighters or police departments to accomplish these goals. When not responding to an emergency, volunteer firefighters sometimes work at the department to repair equipment, uniforms, or vehicles. Given the high levels of wear and tear that comes with this type of work, it's not unusual for frequently used tools to require maintenance. Before diving into an intensive training program with the local fire academy, it's important you're sure about becoming a volunteer firefighter. While some individuals may find battling fires, aiding in search and rescue efforts, and providing emergency medical services fulfilling and even exciting - volunteer firefighting can be taxing and isn't for everyone.

They must be willing to give up the occasional full night of rest or work unsocial hours to help others. They must find it important to give back to the community in meaningful ways that pay it forward. When working in life-or death situations, those who serve alongside become more than colleagues -they become family, said Meadows. In addition to working as a volunteer firefighter that bonds you together with others, firefighters will also likely go through personal and professional changes that they share with their fellow volunteers.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
April 2, 2022

County OKs space to aid circuit court with backlog

Author/Byline: Myra Williams

Ware County commissioners approved a resolution earlier this week to allow the Waycross Judicial Circuit to use space in the Ware County Administration Building for civil hearings to help the system catch up from the COVID-19 pandemic that shut down the courts for several months. The action came during a called meeting of the commission Monday afternoon, March 28. Chief Superior Court Judge Dewayne Gillis presented the board with information on how the space could serve the system and help judges get caught up from being way behind for such a long period of time. "We've been struggling with state requirements and we're trying to catch up the backlog of cases," said Gillis. "We're trying to schedule hearings, but space is an issue for holding them. I've talked with **Scott (Moye, county manager)** about a room we could use but we need a resolution. "Coffee and Ware counties are overwhelming us with a backlog of cases. We hope to eliminate some of the backlog, but it may go on for two years."

Chairman Elmer Thrift requirements would be needed in the building. He was told the sheriff handles security for the courts, but he also would like for the grand jury to be able to use the room. The District Attorney's office would have to ramp up and find employees to help with the dispensing of the cases, Gillis said. "Our mandate is to get caught up," said Gillis. Judge Jeffery Kight told the board there would be no major costs, but the main issue would be sound and that officials are getting a workup on that proposal. **Moye, Ware County Manager**, said the rooms set for being used as court rooms are Rooms 111, 112, 113 and 114 near the rear door of the building in the downstairs portion.

"There would be some minor conversions for them to use them and a cost of about \$10, 000 to make changes, especially to the sound system," **Moye** said. "There would be minor changes such as adding a witness stand." Law library funds from the court system would be used to pay for the changes. The funds are collected from cases handled through the courts each year.

Moye said the court system would be using the building for a three-year period. In other business, the commission appointed Patrick Simmons as a member of the Ware County Department of Family and Children Services board. During a work session held prior to the business meeting, commissioners talked briefly about making plans for a new Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum to be put on the ballot in November. The county and city will begin meetings to iron out the plans for proposed projects. The last SPLOST ended in April 2020 after the voters in Ware County turned down the referendum for a one-cent sales tax as a continued funding source. Thrift stressed the need to get the SPLOST back on the ballot and get it approved to help with capital projects for Ware County.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
March 30, 2022

Carter explains tax situation with state - County followed bid process; consent order covers 3 years

Author/Byline: Myra Williams

Ware County's acceptance of a consent order from the Georgia Department of Revenue and the need to have all property in the county revalued has some folks scratching their heads wondering how the situation is going to impact their tax bills for the next season. According to Billy Carter of the Ware County Tax Assessor's Office, there was no choice in the matter for the county. It was either accept the consent order and address the requirements or lose a lot of state money that's needed to help with county projects. "Every year we're audited and every three years we're reviewed by the Department of Revenue," Carter said. "If the numbers are not in compliance, they write a warning that needs to be corrected. If you fail again, you are revisited.

"For the 2020 review period, the tax digest was still out of compliance. There is no way around a Department of Revenue consent order when it is issued. If you don't get it corrected, you pay the fine and lose state money from utilities (Georgia Power, CSX). It basically comes down to needing a company to overhaul all our computer programs." The fine is \$105, 000 for a three-year period and the loss of state monies, according to Carter. The county, following the consent order, let out for bids receiving two, according to Carter.

One company, Technical Appraiser of Georgia of Macon, responded they could not bid because they did not have time to do the job. Another company, Mc-Cormick Solutions of Dawsonville was also involved in the bidding process. The bid from McCormick Solutions was much higher than the one submitted by Georgia Mass Appraisal Solutions (GMAS), said Carter. "I have all of that information in my office," he stated of the bids.

Commissioners made the choice to hire GMAS for the job at a price of \$750, 000 to get the county's property revalued in a timely manner and help get the county out from under the consent order. The price includes new equipment, new programming to enter data, and training. "The people with GMAS have worked with the Department of Revenue and the owners are retired from there," added Carter. "They designed the program software 150 of the 159 counties in the state are using. They also teach the classes that certify us to do this work." County manager **Scott Moye** said the company comes highly recommended. Coffee, Charlton and Tift counties are all using them.

"I understand there has been a problem for years" said **Moye**. "It goes way back. There have been bandaids put on it for years to try and stay in compliance. You can't patch a system forever."

Carter said the county's computer programs are all outdated. The last complete re-evaluation was done in 1988. Since then, the valuations all have been done inhouse and the county continued

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

with that practice until it got them in a bind. "Our equipment is outdated," Carter explained. "We go out to work in the field, write everything by hand on cards, and then we return to the office and put that information into the system. That process takes three or four days. "With new equipment, we'll have iPads to take photos and punch in the information before we leave a property. We'll have somebody (GMAS personnel) in the office watching everything we do with the new equipment and flagging things that may not be right." Carter explained home sales in the area are the reason for the higher property values. "Our housing sales are what's driving the market," he said. "People are paying list price and it's running up the market. What we do is set fair market value on property." According to Carter, there are a total of 21, 000 pieces of property (commercial, industrial, residential and agricultural) that have to be revalued.

"We have three people certified to do the work - to do all 21, 000 pieces of property," said Carter. "There's no benefit to anyone except the citizens of the county. Our contract is only for review and audit overhaul." After the revaluations, 30 days will be allowed for appeals. "We will handle 95 percent of the appeals in house," said Carter. "Taxpayers need to know that at the end of the day, property values are up. All we do is set fair market value. "We are the property appraisal department. The millage rates are set by the county commission, the school board and the city commission."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
October 13, 2021

Ware Commission starts condemning parcels for roads

Author/Byline: Myra Thrift

Ware County commissioners moved a step closer to the paving of five streets on the south side of the county with the approval of condemnation procedures for 10 parcels of property during the regular monthly meeting Monday, October 11. Osburn Road, RC Davis Road, Morris Road, Pine Lane and Pleasant Acres Road will be improved with paving, drainage and other necessary actions in the near future.

“There are 10 properties that need to be condemned,” said County Manager **Scott Moye**, “to move this project forward.”

Two letters of notifications have been sent to the property owners who have not signed onto the improvements. “We need to get the commission to declare this condemnation procedures. The county would immediately become owners of the property and the property would be appraised as to its value,” said **Moye**. “Because the courts are so backed up, it depends as to whether the owners want to request a jury trial.”

The road building would go on as planned, **Moye** said. “The commission has decided to move forward with the paving and only 10 property owners have not given permission,” said **Moye**.

Property owners who have not signed include BC Waycross Associates LLC, Waycross Choice, LLC, Waycross Property Acquisition Co. LLC, Sarah J. Bunch, Jeanette H. Osburn, G&S Auto Sales of Baxley Inc., Mark R. Osburn, David and Andrea Osburn, David E. Osburn and Mark R. Osburn. “They have all been notified by letter, but with no response,” **Moye** said. “This project needs to get done and the commission is ready to move forward.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
September 29, 2021

Communication, cooperation by host of agencies key pilot rescue

Author/Byline: Rick Nolte

Communication and cooperation among a group of first responders along with utility and government workers last week led to flawless execution in the rescue of a pilot who crashed his small plane alongside McKinley Road near the Ware County Airport. The biplane was dangling from a power line by its tail wheel when members of the Ware County Fire Department and Sheriff's Department arrived around 10:20 a.m., Thursday, September 23. The single-engine plane had broken off the top portion of the pole holding the power line, and was held aloft nose pointing down by only the rest of the pole and its line connected to another pole some 150 yards away.

Authorities identified the pilot as Rob Weyder, 78, of Palm Coast, Florida. Weyder was on his way to South Carolina as part of a group of private planes for a "fly in," according to flight information of the Federal Aviation Administration. Weyder was suspended in the plane's cockpit suffering from cuts on his arms and head, but able to communicate with authorities before he was extricated from the aircraft about 12:35 p.m. by a two-man team operating from a Georgia Power bucket truck. Before the rescuers harnessed Weyder and lowered him to the ground to a team of Emergency Medical Technicians waiting with a litter, the power had to be cut off to the line holding the plane as well as to other lines nearby. In order to stabilize the aircraft for the rescue, it was hooked to the bucket of an excavator brought in from the Ware County Public Works Department.

Once on the ground, Weyder was taken to Memorial Satilla Health by Ware County EMS for treatment. In a comment to the Waycross Journal-Herald's Facebook site on the story of the episode, a woman from New Jersey named Kelly Ann who identified herself as the pilot's daughter, said her father was doing well later Thursday afternoon in the hospital. Attempts to contact the woman by text and Facebook messaging for an update on her father's condition were unsuccessful Monday afternoon, September 27.

Ware County Emergency Management Agency Director Jonathan Daniell said a call about the plane crash came to the county's 911 center about 10:15. Ware County's first responders were joined by personnel from other area fire and rescue departments as well as law enforcement along with employees and officials from Georgia Power and Georgia Power Transmission, on whose line the plane was suspended. "It took everyone involved working together and communicating in a very dangerous situation for that gentleman to come out in fairly good shape," said Ware County Manager **Scott Moye**, who was on the scene shortly after the arrival of the first responders. "You can't say enough about the cooperation it took from so many different agencies to have this outcome. It's amazing what everyone did to keep that plane from falling and get (Weyder) out." The crash cut off power all around Waycross. The line the plane was suspended from is among a host of others running into and away from three power

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

substations located near McKinley Road and the airport. First reports said the plane had hit one of the substations. “It would’ve been devastating if he’d gone into a substation,” Daniell said. Flight information showed Weyder was coming from Ormond Beach, Florida, and planned to stop at the airport in Waycross.

Stephen Winge, who was working near the crash site, said he saw two planes that looked like they were trying to land at the facility, which is approximately two miles from the site of the crash. “A Piper Cub took the lead and the other one (biplane) broke off and when he started climbing, the power cut off,” Winge recalled. “(Pilot) got it going and when he started climbing again, it cut out again. He came over in a glide, but I knew he wasn’t going to make it (airport).”

Winge estimated the pilot was at an altitude of about 1,000 feet when the problems started. He surmised Weyder was attempting to land on the road or in the adjacent field between the rows of power lines when he realized he couldn’t make the airport.

Shawn Harrington who was working in a garage a few streets over from the crash site said he heard the plane’s engines struggling before it went down. “The engine went in and out a couple of times,” Harrington said. “Just a little bit after that, I saw a flash. I thought it was a transformer blowing, but it was (plane) hitting the power line.” The plane’s impact snapped the wooden power pole about eight feet from the top. The pole is among a line about 35 yards into the field from the edge of McKinley Road, a two-lane, paved surface.

Daniell said the FAA was called and that the investigation into the cause of the crash would be handled by the National Transportation Safety Board, the FAA said. A couple of hours after Weyder was rescued, the plane, which the FAA said was built from a kit, was transported by flatbed truck to a hanger at the airport to await inspection by aviation authorities. The site of the crash was on land owned privately and leased for farming and the apparatus needed for electricity transmission, Daniel said. Power was restored to most of the affected area within 30 to 45 minutes of the crash, he said.

Daniell said it had been “10 or 12 years, maybe longer” since there had been a plane crash at the airport. He said in that instance the landing gear wouldn’t engage and the pilot skidded the plane to a stop on its belly at the facility. The unusual circumstances related to Thursday’s crash and the pilot’s rescue was national news later in the afternoon and evening. “My sister (Ellen) lives up in New Jersey and she said it made the New York City news programs,” said Ware County Fire Department Chief Dee Meadows, who directed the rescue operation and communicated with the pilot throughout the ordeal. “This isn’t something you think about dealing with when we go to work.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
August 4, 2021

Third hearing set today for new millage rate

No one from the public attended the first two public hearings on the Ware County Commission’s plans for a millage rate change in the coming fiscal year. The county held two meetings, one at 10 a.m. and the other at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, July 28, but no one was there to voice opinions in support or against the change. The millage rate change will increase property taxes in the county’s jurisdiction by 1.11 percent over the rollback rate, Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** explained.

The tentative increase will result in a millage rate of 15.240 mills, an increase of 0.167 mills. “Without this tentative tax increase the millage rate will be no more than 15.073 mills,” said **Moye**. “The increase for a home of fair market value of \$100,000 is about \$6.34 and the proposed tax increase for non-homestead property with a fair market value of \$100,000 is approximately \$6.68.”

A third public hearing is set for 4:30 p.m. today (Wednesday, August 4). All interested citizens are invited to attend this meeting, said **Moye**. “There was no one in either of our first two meetings,” **Moye** said.

Hearings on the millage rate for the City of Waycross will be at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. today in City Hall. The required third hearing is scheduled for 4 p.m., Tuesday, August 17.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Brantley Beacon, The (GA)
May 5, 2021

Citizens not answering Help Wanted signs

Author/Byline: Myra Thrift

There was a time when businesses and companies had prospective workers standing in line asking to work for a day's wage to help care for their families. Things have drastically changed over the past year with the nation dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. Many believe a result of the government stimulus programs and the additional funding for unemployment have hampered businesses filling positions that were lost during the months of limited services or total shutdowns. "Help Wanted" signs have been posted all over Ware County, Pierce County, Brantley County and surrounding counties with employers offering targeted incentives to reel in loyal, hard-working, productive employees in a time when government stimulus and additional unemployment wages can dissuade workers from taking on a daily job.

Over the last few months, nearly every employer, especially in the fast food industry, has posted signs of additional incentives to encourage workers to commit to a steady job. At places like McDonald's, the company is offering "daily pay" for working. Burger King has a sign at its window that they are looking for faithful employees. Some businesses have posted signs offering signing bonuses and instant employment for those who will show up for an interview. Places like Lowe's and Kroger, Cracker Barrel and Arby's are practically begging for folks to work. Trucking companies are seeking CDL drivers and offering extra incentives to take on those long, over-the-road hauls.

Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** said the county has been experiencing a lack of prospective workers for some time. "That's been going on quite a while," said **Moye**. "During this period while people are receiving all the stimulus checks and entitlements, there's no incentive, no work ethic." **Moye** said he heard that Caterpillar Company was offering a \$1,000 signing bonus for jobs at their businesses. "A lot of places have cut back, such as Applebees, which has closed off part of the restaurant at certain hours because they can't get enough people to work," said **Moye**.

A sign posted at Duncan Donuts says the business is closing at 7 p.m., every evening when they used to be open into the night. Pizza Hut has posted a sign to hire managers, servers and drivers. And it's like that at nearly every business in town.

Nick Smith, of Scruggs Concrete, said basically the company is working hard to retain its current workers. "These folks have to pay for education to get where they are and if we treat them well they will be less inclined to quit because of the stimulus," said Smith. "Our folks are making twice what the minimum wage is. We have so much business we can't keep up. We need to hire more and can't get people to answer the phone." Smith said in years past, Scruggs has never had to advertise for workers. "We're doing all we can to get them to ring (call)," he said. "About a fourth of the people we do attract are qualified to do these jobs. Our job availability is in trucking and driving, local delivery. "We have good pay, insurance, 401k and paid vacation. All of our

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moyer
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

trucks are new. We have excellent driving jobs and they can be close to home.” Smith said in the past, every month a handful of people would visit the company to apply for jobs. But since the stimulus payments have been made, that number has fallen. “We can’t keep finishers and masons and can’t keep workers,” said Smith. “It seems some folks would rather sit at home and get \$12 an hour and not have to go to work. Managers are now having to do the actual work, all the labor. “They started at the bottom and worked their way up to their current positions and now they’re having to come back down to do labor.”

Scruggs is located at 215 W. Blackshear Avenue and has multiple locations throughout Georgia. “With Waycross being as busy a place as it is now, we’re having to turn down a fair amount of work,” Smith said. “But we’re intent on keeping the workers we have now. My granddaddy owns his business and he’s 93 and still working six days a week.”

A sign at Michael’s Deli is offering a \$600 incentive to compete with the federal government, Smith said. “In no world should that be happening,” Smith stated. “Times are really good. We’re covered up in business. But we need workers to satisfy the job openings. “We have good workers and we’re proud of them. We recently hired two very good workers through an ad in your paper (Waycross Journal-Herald) and we’re going to do what we have to to keep them.”

With high school and college graduations just around the corner, the employment picture is looking better than it has in years, a spokesman for the Georgia Labor Department said.

Arby’s has a sign noting it is “Hiring and Inspiring.”

Now who doesn’t want to be inspired?

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
January 6, 2021

Ware officials ready for challenges of 2021

Author/Byline: Myra Thrift

Ware County’s new Commission Chairman Elmer Thrift is eager for the new year to begin so he can start to bring his ideas to the people of Waycross and Ware County, hoping for lots of communication with the citizens and close cooperation with Waycross City Commission members and other officials. Thrift was given the oath of office Monday, December 28 by retiring Ware County State Court Judge Doug Gibson.

Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** plans to hit any issues and problems head-on, as the county moves forward without the additional funding from the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. The veteran administrator said he’s determined to help Ware have a productive and successful year despite the challenges.

Since being involved in construction for years, Thrift said one of his top issues concerns roads, those that exist in Ware County and those that would benefit the county if they were built. Thrift is hopeful that 2021 will bring positive changes in every aspect of life, including freedom from the COVID-19 coronavirus, and the attitudes and outlooks of people who reside in every district of the county. “We have a lot of road maintenance that we need to do,” said Thrift. “We need that overpass and we’ll go hard for that. We also need a perimeter road on the south side and I already have a plan and a drawing.”

Thrift said one of the most important issues in his vision is great communication and cooperation with city officials. “I believe they’re with me 100 percent on my ideas. I’m looking forward to cooperating with the city,” said Thrift. “In my first year, I want us to figure out what we want to do and be united in all of our efforts. ‘United we stand, divided we fall.’”

Thrift said some officials want a new industrial park that would be more beneficial to the city and county. “We’re sitting right on top of one at the old Rice Yard area,” said Thrift. “There are thousands of acres of land with no roads out there and it would be a great place for a perimeter road that we could build and bring right back to Waycross. There are acres of land out there that are 20 feet higher in elevation than even downtown.”

These ideas are sure to cost money, but Thrift believes if folks can see the benefit, and see it in the right setting, they would be in support of the plans. “I want to get my ideas out there and that’s not all,” said Thrift. “God blessed me beyond my wildest imaginations and I’ve got to put something back. We’re looking at some good things to come into Waycross and Ware County. “We have rail service from all over the world and we don’t unload anything here. We have some of the best areas out there for placement of facilities.”

Moye knows he and the commission have their work cut out for them and that they’ll be facing

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moyer
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

new challenges in the new year. “This coming year will definitely bring a new mindset with budgeting and cost control with no SPLOST to supplement the operating budget,” he said. “All capital outlay projects including some transportation infrastructure projects will now have to fit within the General Fund.”

From a managerial standpoint, balancing the budget and budget control will be a tremendous task, **Moyer** said, but he admits that challenges can be good for new insight if strict planning and priorities are in place from the beginning. “All services will now be scrutinized because our revenues are mostly set and we have to operate with a balanced budget,” said **Moyer**.

“No one knows how and for how long COVID-19 will change how the county government operates. The virus could become part of the equation with what we do and how we do it from this point on. The new year has started with many more cases so we’ll need to become more proactive with safety measures as a local government to protect citizens and employees.”

From a personal standpoint, **Moyer** said he believes the county has the commission and county staff to deal with these “opportunities that are before us now. Ware County will always strive to provide the very best services with the staff and resources we have available.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
October 7, 2020

Letter to the editor
Author: **Scott Moye**

The 2021 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum that will be on the November 3 ballot increases the sales tax one cent, to be shared between Ware County and the City of Waycross at a roughly 60%-40% split, respectively. The total amount of SPLOST funds is estimated to be \$47 million over six years. This sales tax will offset property taxes to fund many capital outlay projects that would have to be paid from the General Fund. The SPLOST budget accounts have general descriptions but must be spent for project items in the category, such as purchasing a fire truck or ambulance under the Public Safety Equipment account category.

These account categories have general descriptions because it's usually difficult to determine exactly what capital items will be needed over a six-year period. Included in the 2021 SPLOST are Level II projects which are shared city/county projects funded from the proceeds before the 60/40 split between both governments. These are projects which benefit all residents of Ware County. One of the Level II projects is a replacement to the Public Safety Radio Communications System. The ability of emergency personnel to effectively communicate is paramount to the safety and security of the City and County.

In recent years, public safety agencies have witnessed first-hand the inadequacies of the current radio communication capabilities of all city and county public safety agencies. The scope of the project is to upgrade Waycross and Ware County public safety agencies to one integrated seamless communication network that is a standard-based shared system that provides radio coverage throughout Ware County including remote areas. The turn-key system consists of five towers, 8-site ring microwave network, repeaters, microwave radios, power supply, and buildings & generators.

The other Level II project is enhancements and improvements to the Jim E. Blackburn Public Safety Training Center, a training facility for all public safety personnel for Waycross and Ware County. This new facility was recently constructed with funds from the 2014 SPLOST and will serve not only local public safety personnel, but will host training for other regional city and county personnel. Firefighting, rope rescue, search and rescue, high-rise firefighting, tactical operations for law enforcement, rifle and pistol qualifications are some examples. The facility encompasses an administrative office, four story training tower for law enforcement and fire departments, a two story burn building for fire suppression training, and a 20-lane firearm shooting range.

There are two proposed allocations to the Waycross-Ware County Development Authority (WWDA) and the Downtown Waycross Development Authority (DWDA) for projects to facilitate and enhance economic opportunities. The amount of these allocations will also be removed first from the proceeds before the percentage split between Ware County and Waycross.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The WWDA will use SPLOST dollars to assist existing industries with expansions when applicable. Other plans are to prepare current sites owned by the authority for development. This preparation of sites will include cleaning and grubbing, extension of needed utilities, paving roads, and mitigating wetland obstacles. The WWDA also plans to inventory additional sites for a possible third industrial park.

The DWDA has proposed a master plan created to improve signage, lighting, safety, and appearance to the downtown area. Other plans are to implement Phase II of the Downtown Christmas Wonderland with decorations, lights, and attractions, in addition to converting the train depot into an interactive train museum showcasing memorabilia, photographs, tours, and exhibits highlighting Waycross' railroad history for tourism and education.

Ware County has six account categories in the 2021 SPLOST consisting of the following:

1. Building, Equipment, & Improvements (\$5,249,310 (21% of county total): Funds needed to repair and/or replace equipment for county-owned buildings during the 6 years of SPLOST.
2. Roads, Bridges, Equipment & Drainage Improvements (\$12,940,690 53%): This is Ware County's largest infrastructure need and the most expensive. Funds to resurface roads, pave dirt roads, replace/repair county bridges, and replace/repair drainage infrastructure such as pipes and ditches. Currently, the cost to resurface a street is approximately \$150,000 per mile, and \$800,000 to pave a dirt street, without concrete curb and gutter.
- The Ware County Single-County TSPLOST will end March 2023; therefore, no local funds will be available for transportation improvements. Ware County and Waycross have many more repairs and improvements to be done beyond what was budgeted in the TSPLOST fund. Projects were budgeted at \$22 million forecast to allow for the receipt of the maximum total possible but current projections based on actual revenues received to date amounts to \$15-\$17 million is the actual amount of proceeds for the county's project list.
3. Public Safety Facilities & Equipment (\$3,200,000, 13%): Funds used in this account category are for existing public safety facility repairs and improvements along with providing necessary equipment for all Ware County public safety departments.
4. Parks, Recreation Facilities & Equipment (\$1,500,000, 6%): This account has funds to assist with the construction of a Miracle League field at the Trembling Earth Recreation Complex (TERC) to be used by those with disabilities. Other projects are designated to repair and replace equipment at the TERC facility used for baseball, softball, football, and basketball, along with renovations and improvements to sites such as Bailey Street Park and Memorial Park.
5. Information Technology Software & Equipment (\$600,000, 2%): Funds in this account are to maintain and upgrade various hardware and software as needed.
6. Courthouse courtroom Improvements (\$1,200,000, 5%): The existing courtroom space in the

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

courthouse has been outgrown over the last 60 years due to the increasing number of court cases. As a comparison, there were 215 cases filed in the courthouse in 1959. In 2019, there were 2,871 cases filed. Court cases are expected to increase considerably over the next few years. In 1959, court was held just twice a year, now, court is held nearly every day of the week. Courtrooms are shared between four Superior Court judges and one State Court judge. This project is to provide sufficient courtroom space.

Currently there are 156 counties out of a total of 159 in Georgia benefitting from a SPLOST. The unpopularity of property taxes and the simplicity and perceived fairness of sales taxes have made the county 1% Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax a popular method for funding needed capital projects in Georgia.

The Ware County Commission recently approved a roll-back millage rate of 15.240 and has rolled back the rate for the last few years. The 2014 SPLOST ended on June 30, 2020 with total proceeds around \$41 million.

Funding from the SPLOST was a substantial resource that allowed the Ware County Commission to keep rolling back the millage rate.

Scott Moye Ware County Manager

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
August 12, 2020

Ware Commission drops millage rate, '20-21 funds static

Author/Byline: Myra Thrift

Ware County commissioners officially adopted the annual millage rate Monday at a rate lower than last year during the regular monthly meeting held at the Administration Building. Tax Commissioner Roger Collins explained that although property owners may have had their assessments increased, they will not pay more taxes if they are properly homesteaded. The county's millage rate for the coming year was set at 15.240, down slightly from last year's rate of 15.647. Collins told the board that over the last year, a lot of new businesses have come online, new buildings have been constructed and houses are being sold steadily. "We will have the same amount of tax as last year, but the millage rate will come down," Collins said. The change is a result of an increased digest amount for Ware County properties.

Chairman Jimmy Brown pointed out the millage rate is the lowest in years, his administration working the rate down from 16.540. "It's that one penny SPLOST that allows us to do this," said Brown.

He explained that Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax offsets the costs of projects without having to increase the millage rate. One penny SPLOST generates about \$8 million a year, according to County Manager **Scott Moye**.

Brown offered a motion in response to several Jamestown residents who spoke at the 3 p.m. work session, asking the county to find another route for the proposed ABC Avenue project to provide citizens an escape route when CSX trains are blocking railroad grade crossings.

Ware County Engineer Brandon Wallace told the board a couple of months ago, CSX told Ware County folks they would rather they not build the roadway on the railroad's right-of-way. "There will be a lot more impact on private property owners," said Wallace.

During the work session, commissioners heard a lot of comments from people in the ABC Avenue area who are against the new plans for building an access road alongside the railroad to give residents an emergency outlet when trains are stopped on the tracks. One man noted the county has been talking about this situation for years and wondered when somebody is going to do something about it. He did not want the road to be built on his private property.

Jennifer Rainwater, who resides on a portion of the proposed property, told the board she has been to "umpteen meetings" and asked "who's going to fix it." Rainwater brought with her some wooden stakes that had been placed on her Tanner Lane property by the county without her permission. "I'm not from here. I'm not buddies with anyone. This is a vicious cycle. We don't want the road coming on our property," she said. When told the railroad has to be considered, she said "somebody needs to have the 'stuff' to stand up to them."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Others in the audience spoke adamantly about getting an alternative and doing it in a timely manner. Brown had several points to his motion, which passed unanimously. First, effective Monday, the community should choose one spokesman to address the commission. Second, include everyone east of the railroad. Third, create a committee organized from members of the Jamestown community. Fourth, plan a meeting at Jamestown Baptist Church and provide the Ware County Commission with a report by November 9, 2020. Fifth, decide on a way of escape. And sixth, all residents in the area need to sign a resolution of support or non-support.

“We’ve been spinning our wheels,” said Brown, who appeared frustrated by comments made during the work session. “Many hours have been spent planning the project. Engineers have spent a lot of money and nothing has been done. We’ve spent \$292,000 and still nothing is done. I make this as a motion. We've had many, many meetings and the engineers still don't know how to solve this problem. “We’ve been accused of taking sides and we want you to be satisfied. You bring us your plan.”

Commissioner Steve Barnard said the commission took a consensus in the past and about 75 percent of the residents agreed that ABC Avenue was the way to go. “I recommend we go ahead and put it on ABC Avenue,” said Barnard.

Added Commissioner Leonard Burse Jr., “No one knows better than the people affected. But, we’re elected to represent the people. It’s CSX that renigged.”

Brown also asked the community to choose a person to monitor the train traffic in their area, and to keep notes with dates and times of when trains block the crossings.

In other action, a contract to keep **Scott Moye** in his position as county manager for another year was approved by a vote of 5-0. Commissioners agreed **Moye** has done a good job and deserves to be kept in his current position at his current pay level. His existing contract expired last week and the attorney told the board that an official contract with a possible wage increase will be ready for their approval at their next meeting.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal-Herald (GA)
July 1, 2020

Uncertainty clouds Ware’s \$41 million budget
Author/Byline: Rick Nolte

With an eye on uncertainty, the Ware County Commission approved a budget totaling just more than \$41 million for fiscal year 2020-21. The action came on a unanimous vote of the five commissioners during a special called meeting Monday, June 28, at the Ware County Administration Building. The meeting followed a public hearing on the budget. Chairman Jimmy Brown and Commissioner Steve Barnard were in commission chambers while Commissioners Jerry Pope, Burton Carter and Leonard Burse were virtual participants.

The budget, which begins Wednesday, July 1 (today), represents a decrease of about \$1.64 million from fiscal year 2020. “This is a budget that’s more conservative from the standpoint of revenue,” County Manager **Scott Moye** said. “We don’t know where we’ll be in the next three to five months.” Added Brown: “We’re at the ‘if’ stage on everything.”

The county is facing the uncertainty of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on tax proceeds along with the end of funds from the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax from the 2014 issue after July. An extension of the penny tax was defeated in November 2019, but will be back on the ballot in this year’s General Election on Nov. 3. “Not having the SPLOST has drastically changed the way we’ve budgeted the services that we have,” **Moye** said. “It’s the first time Ware County has faced something like this in more than 30 years.”

Finance Director Beverly Harrell said the county will receive its last payments for the 2014 SPLOST this month and next. After that, a return of the funds it provides — \$47 million split roughly 60-40 between the county and City of Waycross — will be up to the voters again in five months. “We’re in for a rough ride,” Burse said. Brown followed Burse, saying, “We’re in for a rougher ride if we don’t get that penny back.” If the referendum passes, its funds would return in April, 2021.

Actual total of the budget is \$41,006,709. Of that figure, \$25,103,356 is in the general fund. The bulk of the fund’s revenues come from a little more than \$19.4 million in taxes and \$4.07 million in charges for services.

Highest expenses on the ledger are slightly more than \$13.2 million for public safety items, topped by roughly \$5.66 million for the jail and \$3.61 million for the Sheriff’s Department.

Emergency medical services receives \$1.953 million and the fire department \$1.344 million. Of the other major expenditures, the general government total \$3.83 million, judicial \$3.016 million and public works \$2.203 million.

The budget includes a two percent cost of living raise for all county employees, but no funds for

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

any other pay increases. Harrell said that raise is more than wiped out by the cost of the county's health insurance rising by six percent. Included in the budget's passage was a hiring freeze beginning today (Tuesday, June 30).

Harrell said revenues through April of this year were off 5.5 percent over the same period last year. She said the state is predicting a decrease of 11 percent because of the impact of the pandemic. "If the revenue starts falling off too much, we're going to have to make cuts," she said. "We just don't know what the COVID is going to do to revenues."

Not included in the budget is money for repairs to CSX railway crossings that likely are ahead in the coming year.

In other business, the commission also approved the purchase of a bulldozer the county had been leasing the past five years. Total package for the purchase was approximately \$93,000, including a two-year power train warranty. The equipment has about 3,000 hours on it, **Moye** said. Purchase of a new model would be around \$200,000, he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
February 1, 2019

Hatcher Road Just One Topic Addressed By Moye

Author: Jack Williams III

The long-awaited Hatcher Point Road improvement project is now under construction as workmen install concrete pads for new Georgia Power Co. utility poles along the well-traveled right-of-way, Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** announced Thursday. The new power poles are scheduled to be in place by the second week of April, and will begin transmitting electric power by late spring, he said.

During an address before the Waycross Exchange Club, **Moye** said the Hatcher Point Road project became his “number one priority” after becoming Ware County manager. The project has been on the drawing board since 2004, he reminded. **Moye** said it will take about 16 months to complete the road-widening project.

In order to save time and begin construction sooner, **Moye** said he has approached the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and requested that they transfer the U.S. 1 North rail overpass project to Ware County’s control. The rail overpass is expected to cost between \$40 million and \$50 million upon completion, he said.

He said preliminary engineering work for this badly needed over-pass has not yet started. He said Wolverton Engineering of Atlanta is currently working on the project’s scope, including right-of-way acquisition. “It’s going to take a while, possibly a couple of years,” before the necessary right-of-way can be acquired, he said. “My phone rings all the time” because of the train blockage problem on U.S. 1 North, **Moye** conceded. We want to take this project on ourselves with the DOT’s okay.”

Meanwhile, **Moye** said the Ware County Tax Commissioner’s office is now moving into the 45,000 square foot Ware County Administration Building. The \$8 million structure is located behind the courthouse and was financed by the 2008 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), he said.

Both the Planning and Codes Department and Ware Tax Assessor’s Office are to be moved into the new building by November, he said. The new county office building features a meeting room capable of holding up to 75 people, **Moye** said. After November, the Ware County Courthouse will be solely confined to court-related offices, including courtrooms, judges’ offices, the Clerk of Court, etc., **Moye** said.

Moye listed several ongoing paving and drainage projects Ware County is currently addressing, including:

- Cypress Street paving project off U.S. 1 North near Lewis & Raulerson Oil Co.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

- Wahoma drainage project has been delayed because of 20 inches of standing water caused by recent rains.
- Wahoma Area Drainage Study scheduled to get underway within the next 60 days. “Water just sits” in much of the projected study area, **Moye** said.
- A perimeter fence is to be erected around the runway at the Waycross-Ware County Airport to improve security. A drainage improvement project is planned to correct drainage problems at the airfield, which was built in the 1940s by the U.S. Army Air Corps.
- ABC Avenue Extension Project. The first part of the two-part project is now under construction. The North leg of the roadway is located on CSX’s right-of-way. Its plan is expected within the next 30 days.
- New parking lot design for the Ware County Courthouse is in the works, including speed limit signs. Plan will permit 20 percent more parking spaces.
- Public Safety Training Center is 25 percent complete. It’s located at the old Tri-County Landfill and will include a burn building and shooting range.
- New flag pole is planned for erection at the front of Ware County Administration Building. The original design didn’t provide for a flag pole.
- Making plans now for continuation of the SPLOST. “It’s our bread and butter. We would be in dire shape without it,” **Moye** said.
- Considering a proposal to relocate Ware Juvenile Court to the former First National Bank Building, which is being vacated by the Ware Tax Assessor’s Office. The Ware Board of Registrars will remain at the bank building.
- The Vining Building, located behind the Ware County Courthouse, is to be razed later this year.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
August 18, 2018

Southeast Ware County Firehouse Is Dedicated

Author: Myra Thrift

A special dedication service was held Friday morning signifying the long-awaited second fully staffed Ware County Fire Station. Formerly known as Southeast District III, the Ware County Fire Station III was dedicated to the service of folks in Ware County and especially those living on the east side of Waycross in the Tomberlin Road, Central Avenue and Knight Avenue areas. It's been 40 years since the station on Vickers Street off Knight Avenue was started as a tiny standalone building adequate to hold two trucks, a small rest room and a tiny sitting area.

With a lot of hard work from the firefighters from Station I and dedicated volunteers, the station has been upgraded into a first-class facility that will allow for two fulltime firefighters to remain on-site 24 hours a day. Two bunk rooms have been added as sleeping quarters, along with a kitchen, a shower, a living area and a patio.

Ware County Fire Chief Dee Meadows choked back emotion as he told how the station came to be. "This is a result of a lot of people putting their stamp on this station," said Meadows. "The men and women of our department did 99 percent of the work." The new flag pole at the front of the station was donated by Woodmen of the World. It now holds a huge American flag that was raised at the beginning of Friday's ceremony.

"This is a complete team unit," Meadows said. "The community needed it and the commission carried it forth. I do not believe in fate. I believe in God and I believe this was a project of God."

Meadows thanked several people by name including his pastor, Johnny Summerall, the county manager, **Scott Moye**, each of the commissioners, all of the firefighters and everyone who helped to make the day a reality. "This is a very great day indeed," said Meadows, noting that the county began its use as a full-time station on July 1. Since that day, much time has been cut off several responses to wrecks and fires.

Several days ago, an accident occurred on Knight Avenue and the firefighter response was 1:45 minutes while the truck from Station I took 18 minutes to arrive. "Response time is absolutely crucial," said Meadows. "The quicker we get to a person the better off they are." Meadows added that he hopes the county can build another fire station before he retires.

"This is a dream come true," said Ware County Commission Chairman Jimmy Brown, a former fire chief who recalled the first creation of the Rural Fire Defense Fund by Sen. Herman Talmadge. Georgia received federal money and with that, Ware began its project of providing fire service to county citizens. "We had a plan," said Brown, who was hired as Ware's fire chief in 1974. "Saving lives and property. That's what it's all about. You cannot put a dollar value on a life."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Pastor Summerall quoted from Isaiah 43:2, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Summerall then asked God’s blessings on the station and the men and women who serve through there.

After the program, those attending were invited to visit the inside of the station and see the final project. Jim Goodman, who was one of the founding members of the Southeast District III Station, was on hand for the dedication. Brown said when it was first started, the fire truck was kept parked in Goodman’s yard.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
August 18, 2018

Cady Leaves County For DWDA Position

Author: Myra Thrift

Edward Cady, the human resources director for Ware County, has submitted his resignation effective Friday, Aug. 31, to accept the director's position at the Downtown Waycross Development Authority. "I am excited for Ed and this great opportunity to lead the economic development and revitalization of downtown Waycross," said Ware County manager **Scott Moye**.

"The local Downtown Development and revitalization of Waycross and Ware County are extremely important to me and I am thankful to have the opportunity to serve in this capacity," said Cady. "The board of commissioners and the county manager of Ware County have always encouraged and allowed me to exercise the skillsets in the position of HR director to meet the industry needs and standards of professionalism that our employees, elected officials, and citizenry have come to expect," said Cady.

He added that the current Ware County leadership has equipped him to become a better employee, leader and servant to the community by investing the necessary business tools in his position capacity for him to achieve success. "This has enabled me to step up to the next stage of leadership by taking their investments placed in me to the next level of serving as the executive director of the DWDA in our downtown Waycross business community," said Cady.

The board of commissioners in conjunction with the county manager that makes up the executive leadership team of Ware County is one of the greatest contributors in the success of my career, Cady said. "They have invested training during my tenure through the facets of health, commerce, technology and economic developmental tools. I was accepted and planted in good soil by its employees (Ware County), the Ware County leadership team watered me and He through its employees, leadership, local governing authorities and community gave the increase. Jana Dyke and the WWDA team is also a huge success by cultivating economic diversity concepts to me."

Cady said that **Scott Moye**, Jimmy Brown, Carlos Nelson, Danny Turner, Jerry Pope and Steve Barnard have a heart to see the employees and people of the county succeed. "**Scott Moye** believed in me, and for that I am forever grateful to him and his leadership characteristics that were sown into me. When we succeed, our community succeeds. Of all my career opportunities, stepping aside from my HR position is one of the hardest because of the employees I serve and its leadership team. I am not being plucked and moved, I am being grafted into a greater task of community cooperation that brings governing authorities from all areas of Ware County together for a common cause: growth!"

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cady added that the Ware County community understands the challenges of economic growth and that it should be the compassion of every individual to form a bond that keeps a community together even when transparent boundaries may exist. “Has Ware County enabled me to advance towards this next career life step? Yes! Ware County has given me the exposure to constructive leadership, leadership of positive action, but most of all the type of leadership we all should be striving for — maintaining integrity and investing in the neighborhoods and communities of Waycross and Ware County.”

Cady said he does not see this move as stepping away from Ware County but as an opportunity in stepping alongside Waycross and Ware County’s strategic partnership and the Downtown Waycross Development Authority’s new season of economic dominance in the region. “With the WWDA and Jana Dyke, we all can achieve this as one team,” said Cady. “The board of directors of DWDA have voted and selected me to lead the visionary dreams of downtown growth and revitalization. We, along with the team of community leadership, will make our downtown a place for all Georgia to recognize as the standard of what a downtown should be.” Cady said he believes that Waycross and Ware County are stepping up and the resources for successful revitalization are being staged.

“It’s time to engage the lever of motion,” said Cady. “Let us put our hand on the wheel of vision and begin to set the plow and not look back. Our harvest is in site! Let’s plow Waycross and Ware County, for our future is beginning to bud again!” Cady graduated Ware County High School and has studied at Okefenokee Technical College and taken specialized human resources management courses at the University of Georgia. He currently resides in Waycross and pastors at Emerson Park Baptist Church. He previously served as the chaplain for the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
August 15, 2018

Error In Sum Of Overpaid County Taxes Is Corrected

A reporting error occurred in a news article regarding a family that has overpaid its Ware County property taxes for the past 20 years on page 1 of Tuesday's Journal-Herald.

The amount of tax reimbursement the Ware County Commission is paying to the Walker family for overpayment of three years of taxes will be only \$841, rather than the \$5,035 as was mentioned in the news article in Tuesday's edition of the paper. The larger sum was actually the total of overpayment during the full 20 years.

In the commission meeting at the courthouse on Monday, Chairman Jimmy Brown asked County Manager **Scott Moye** how much money was involved and he answered \$5,035. The \$841 amount was not mentioned.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
March 31, 2018

Ware County Presented Check By ACCG Official

Ware County received from Ben Pittarelli (left), Health Program and Insurance Marketing director (ACCG), the remaining funds from the 2017-18 Wellness Grant that was awarded to the Health and Wellness Program for Ware County employees.

Anna Lane, Ware County clerk, was on hand to receive the award on behalf of County Manager **Scott Moye**, Chairman Jimmy Brown, Commissioner Carlos Nelson, Commissioner Steve Barnard, Commissioner Danny Turner, Commissioner Jerry Pope, Human Resources director Edward Cady, and HR assistant (wellness coordinator) Theresa Bailey.

Ware County Commissioners each year designate and allow for application these types of grant programs by the administration team for the employees of Ware County in the management of their health related programs.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
March 27, 2018

Ware, Waycross Urging AG To Remove T-SPLOST From Ballot
Author: Myra Thrift

By joint authority, the Waycross and Ware County commissions have resolved to ask Georgia’s attorney general Christopher M. Carr to remove the regional Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax question from the May 22 ballot in Waycross and Ware County. Citizens here have already voted to approve a “single county” one-cent T-SPLOST for Waycross-Ware.

At a called joint meeting Monday at the Ware County Courthouse, both governments, led by Ware Chairman Jimmy Brown and Waycross Mayor John Knox, approved and signed the resolution. Copies are to be sent directly to the attorney general and to Corey Hull, of the regional Georgia Department of Transportation committee.

Attorney Tony Rowell pointed out that the state decided that the Regional T-SPLOST vote would take place on May 22 in all of the 18-county area including the four major counties, Ware, Tift, Lowndes and Coffee. Wide-ranging speculation includes one viewpoint that — should the measure pass region-wide — the state could require an additional penny in retail tax be paid in Ware County.

That would be in addition to the single county T-SPLOST approved in Ware last November and due to be enacted April 1. “If the region does not pass this, there will be no issue,” said Rowell. Commissioner Steve Barnard pointed out that Ware County would be pushing for a “no” vote among its citizens.

With all members of the county commission and four members of the Waycross City Commission seated around the table, County Manager **Scott Moye** called for the motion. A motion was made for a joint resolution requesting the AG remove Ware County from the May 22 TSPLOST vote. It was unanimously approved and then each of the commissioners in attendance signed the document to be forwarded to the state officials.

“I’m afraid the AG may wait until after the regional vote to make his decision,” said Mayor John Knox. “He needs to rule on it now.” It was also pointed out that HB 134 says Ware County cannot be overridden. “I don’t know how they have gone this far without chapter and verse,” said Knox.

County Commissioner Steve Barnard noted that the sooner the document gets to the AG, the better off Ware will be. “We are putting the regional commission on notice that we are sending this document to the attorney general and asking for immediate action,” said Ware Commissioner Carlos Nelson. The document was to be sent immediately by registered mail to the attorney general and to the DOT representative.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Attending for the city were Mayor Knox and commissioners Jon Tindall, Norman Davis and John Threat, city manager Raphael Maddox, attorney Rick Currie and city clerk Julie Dinkins. County manager **Moye**, county attorney Tony Rowell and each of the commissioners say they believe the May 22 vote will have no consequence in Ware County, since Ware already has approved its own T-SPLOST. However, **Moye** pointed out that the attorney general will be the one making the decision.

A reporter asked: “Will Ware County file a lawsuit in the matter if the decision doesn't go the way Ware hopes?” “That remains to be seen,” said **Moye**. “We are hoping right now that the AG removes the TSPLOST vote off the Ware County ballot.”

Ware County and Waycross will collect about \$45 million over a five-year period of the T-SPLOST in the single-county plan, while, if forced to join in with the 17 other counties in the region, Waycross-Ware would collect only around \$10 million over a 10-year span. All of the monies collected will be used for transportation purposes, roadway improvements and a railroad overpass.

Also in the meeting, Ware County commissioners voted to accept a bid of \$18,000 from Southeast Mower for the purchase of two Husqvarna lawn mowers to be used by the Ware County Public Works Department.

Ware County entered into an executive session at the end of the meeting to discuss personnel issues.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moyer
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
February 3, 2018

Hatcher Point Mall Road Widening Back On Track

Ware County has received good news from its legislative delegation in Atlanta — the much anticipated and long awaited widening of the Hatcher Point Road has been moved up to the 2019 fiscal year budget, rather than the 2025 year previously announced.

Work to widen Hatcher Point Road — which runs from the Brunswick Highway to U.S. 1 and divides the Walmart and The Mall at Waycross shopping centers — will be moved up from its previously scheduled date of 2025 to 2019, according to an announcement from Senator Tyler Harper, Representatives Jason Shaw and John Corbett and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) division planning director Jay Roberts.

“We are absolutely thrilled that the project has been put back into the FY 19 budget. That means July of this year,” said county manager **Scott Moyer**. “We have a couple of items on easement that we have to resolve but other than that, we are ready for it to get moving.”

Moyer said completion of the widening project will take about 18 months to two years from start to finish. He anticipates the project to be let in late summer of this year. The Georgia Department of Transportation will commit more than \$4 million to the project. Work will begin in 2019.

“This is the good news we have been waiting for,” said **Moyer**. “We believe that this project will have a huge impact on traffic there with the number of businesses located on the street.” **Moyer** said there may be times during the construction that congestion on the narrow thoroughfare will worsen but that he does not anticipate any business in the area being severely affected. “We are not going to shut down the road, but it may become necessary to close portions from time to time,” said **Moyer**. “We will make whatever changes are necessary on a day-to-day basis.” **Moyer** said county commissioners are committed to assuring that no business is negatively impacted during the construction phase.

“I am grateful to GDOT, especially Director Jay Roberts, in working with us to expedite this project,” said Shaw. “The Hatcher Point Road project is paramount to encouraging economic development along one of our busiest business corridors.”

Said Harper: “This project will also create an added measure of safety for our residents and those traveling U.S. 1 to other destinations.” “I want to thank my colleagues and Director Roberts for coming together to better serve our citizens by improving safety and traffic flow in this busy area,” said Corbett.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
August 29, 2017

Turnout For Ware Co. Employees Health Fair Was ‘Overwhelming’

The Ware County employees fall Wellness Health Fair Thursday at the beautiful Trembling Earth Recreation Complex gymnasium drew a response that was “overwhelming,” said **Scott Moye**, county manager.

Many health industry vendors throughout the community came and set up booths offering such freebies as blood pressure screenings, medical massage, healthy eating tips and preventative care tips. The UGA Extension Office provided nutritional information on healthy foods, not-so-healthy foods and foods that appear healthy but have high levels of sugar content, said **Moye**.

Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Georgia contracted Hooper Holmes to provide biometric screenings for employees who are participants in the Ware County Medical Benefit program. Those screenings included blood pressure, lab workup, glucose monitoring, and health educational information materials, said **Moye**.

“As the Ware County board of commissioners and county government elected officials are always looking to provide preventative health care options for its employees, Rite Aid administered flu shots for all those who wish to receive this year’s vaccine while attending the health fair,” said **Moye**. “Those costs are covered under the wellness preventative medical plan with BCBSGA with no employee costs.”

To recognize the importance of Breast Cancer Awareness with county employees, St. Joseph Candler Hospital was onsite with its mobile mammogram unit. A spokesperson from the mobile mammogram unit said that this year’s participation with Ware County employees was one of the largest with the unit. “They told us, ‘We look forward to being a participating vendor again next year’,” said **Moye**.

The participation of employees and vendors surpassed last year’s attendance, **Moye** said, while vendors even provided door prizes to employees who participated in the event.

Ware County focuses on its wellness program and for the last several years has been awarded a Wellness Grant through the ACCG Health & Safety Program, said **Moye**. “With that in mind, any employee who participated in the fair was registered for a grand prize drawing of \$500,” said **Moye**. “The employees are the success of this program, and we appreciate the many vendors who contribute to the health and welfare of our Ware County employees.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross and Ware County Georgia
August 29, 2017

Moye Gets Long Contract

Author: Myra Thrift

The Ware County Commission approved a three-year contract for Ware County manager **Scott Moye**, who has been on the job for a year now, Monday during a called meeting at the Ware County Courthouse. Prior to the meeting, commissioners held a semi-monthly work session to discuss a variety of business topics.

All five board members, Chairman Jimmy Brown and commissioners Carlos Nelson, Jerry Pope, Danny Turner and Steve Barnard, were eager to approve **Moye's** contract as each one voiced approval of the job he has done since being hired a year ago. "I say put it on the agenda (for the called meeting) and let's take action," said Pope. His suggestion was met with unanimous approval. The item was then added to the called meeting agenda and was first to be addressed at the 3 p.m. meeting. Not only did the commission approve, but one member of the audience spoke, noting that **Moye** has been "easy to work with and is doing an excellent job of taking care of the county's business."

Moye began working with the county a year ago after Paul Smith resigned as manager.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Scott Moye** is listed below.]

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
July 25, 2017

T-SPLOST Brings County And City Together
Ware Employees To Receive A 2 Percent Raise In Near Future
Author: Myra Thrift

City-county cooperation is at an all-time high between Ware County and the City of Waycross as the two governments make plans for a one-cent sales tax referendum that could raise \$50 million to be used specifically for transportation issues. Ware County commissioners Monday approved a resolution that calls for an intergovernmental agreement with the city of for the use and distribution of proceeds to be generated by the 2018 Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum. A county-wide vote on the issue is to take place on Tuesday, Nov. 7. Members of both commissions have pledged to use T-SPLOST monies to address the need for an overpass over the railroad tracks on State Streets.

The Ware Commission also Monday approved a 2 percent cost of living raise for county employees to take effect on the next pay period.

The two governments agreed to call for the T-SPLOST rather than join the 18-county region in calling for a regional T-SPLOST. Commissioners noted that with approval of the single-county tax, Ware County and Waycross will split about \$40 to \$45 million (rather than receive an approximated \$11 million if they join a regional vote). The next step in the process will be a called meeting on Aug. 17 to officially schedule the referendum, in accordance with state regulations. During a called meeting Monday, the commission unanimously approved the intergovernmental agreement with all five commissioners voting “aye. “The Waycross City Commission last week voted to sanction the referendum.

Ware County manager **Scott Moye** said a joint city-county TSPLOST committee met Friday and completed work on a list of proposed projects to be advertised to the public in the coming weeks. The county also agreed to submit three projects to the Georgia Department of Transportation for the annual LMIG (Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant) funds: the resurfacing of Central Avenue, the paving of Cypress, Myrtle and Gilchrist streets and the replacement of a culvert on Monroe Street. The three projects will receive a little more than \$1 million from the DOT with a county match of \$275,181, according to **Moye**.

The commission’s approval of a 2 percent raise for county workers is something that has been wanted for a long while, the chairman of the board said. “I am tickled to death and excited that we can do this for our employees,” said Chairman Jimmy Brown. “It’s been a long time coming. We have the best employees anywhere.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Commissioner Steve Barnard noted that the work on Pebble Hill Road and Manor-Millwood Road is not complete, that the surface has to “cure” for 30 days before workers can return and complete the job. Some temporary white lines were drawn on the road that were not straight and had residents there concerned and asking questions, Barnard said. He said the lines will be straightened. “Let them know it is not complete. This is only temporary,” Barnard said.

Moye announced that the next city-county joint meeting will be held Wednesday at noon at Waycross City Auditorium.

Between a 2 p.m. work session, where commissioners discussed the issues that were approved at the called meeting, and the actual called meeting at 3:30, commissioners were given a look at the county’s brand spanking new ambulance as EMSdirect or Dr. Bill Parham drove the vehicle to the courthouse and opened its doors for a peek inside. Equipment including radios and medical items have yet to be added to the vehicle. The ambulance was purchased with funds from the 2008 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
March 28, 2017

Ware Approves Tax Collection Pact Granting Collins A Raise

Author: Myra Thrift

Ware County commissioners Monday revisited the issue of tax collections for the City of Waycross and by a narrow margin, approved the three-way contract the city had already sanctioned. During a called meeting Monday afternoon, county commissioners voted 3-2 to approve the contract among the city, the county and Ware County Tax Commissioner Roger Collins, but also took a bite out of the money the tax commissioner would have received for the contract. The county voted to take a 10 percent cut for administrative fees.

The city had previously agreed to pay the tax commissioner an additional \$10,000 a year for the collection of city taxes, added to the already \$20,000 Waycross has been paying. During a work session prior to the called meeting, commissioners discussed the issue that has been a hot button for some time. The issue was listed on the agenda for an earlier meeting in March but died after none of the board members offered a motion for action.

Commissioner Jerry Pope told the county manager Monday he wanted it on the agenda for a vote. Pope cast one of the yes votes, the others provided by Commissioner Carlos Nelson and Chairman Jimmy Brown. Commissioners Steve Barnard and Danny Turner voted against the contract.

During the work session, commissioners also heard a report from Ware County EMS director Dr. Bill Parham, Planning and Codes director James Shubert and Ware County Fire Chief Donnie Griffis who had been instructed to look at safe and secure ways of housing the county's ambulances. Commissioners learned at an early March meeting that the new ambulances are being parked underneath metal shelters at the city fire stations, moved from where they had previously been housed inside more secure and sound structures.

None of the men had good news for commissioners. It appears that the Southeast District Fire Station would not be adequate in size or strength and would need a ton of work to be brought up to par, Emerson Park's fire station would require a new building and no other buildings in the county have the proper size or structure. One additional ambulance can be housed at Fire Station I in the Industrial Park, but commissioners want to find a more central location to save time when responding to emergencies. Parham said about 75 percent of the EMS calls are within the city limits.

Shubert said the SE District station is showing signs of settling with cracks appearing in the concrete and the cement blocks. He encouraged commissioners to get with the city and make a plan. "I don't recall the former county manager ever telling us any of this," said Chairman Jimmy Brown.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moyer
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

County manager **Scott Moyer** said the agreement with the city was for the county to pay \$10,200 a year for the housing of the ambulances. In 2015 and 2016, two metal shelters were set up to house the cars, one at the Havana Fire Station and one at the Riverside Fire Station. Since the ambulances have been parked under the shelters, one has been hit by lightning, damaging its electrical system. “Do we want to ask (the city) for modifications?” **Moyer** asked.

Commissioner instructed **Moyer** to meet with the city manager and see where the county needs to go with the agreement. Brown added that \$180,000 ambulances are not meant to be kept out in the weather. Commissioners Turner and Pope agreed they do not want to see the ambulances moved farther out but that the county needs to look at the future. “If someone is having a heart attack, they need to be there fast,” said Brown.

The commission also approved a bid of \$25,508.10 for six scoreboards and all related accessories for the Ware County Recreation Department to replace existing boards at the Tremblin’ Earth Recreation Complex. The boards will be paid for through funds received from the Coca-Cola Company’s annual beverage bid. They will be purchased from Nevco. Commissioners also voted to approve renewal of a contract with Crowder Gulf and Ceres Environmental (as secondary) for providing debris removal in the event of a disaster. Ware County Emergency Management Agency director Jonathan Daniell explained that this is one of the provisions for receiving federal disaster funds. No money is involved or exchanged in the contract.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
February 11, 2017

Waycross Kiwanians Updated On Ware County Administration Building Project

Ware County Manager **Scott Moye** (left), guest speaker at the Waycross Kiwanis Club’s Friday meeting, provided an update on the ongoing construction of the new Ware County Administration Building.

Noting that its original design mirrored the marble construction of the adjacent courthouse, he said that its planners decided to save over \$1 million by opting for a brick facade. “Instead, this money will go toward parking and other needs,” he added, noting that several sample walls will soon be provided for commissioners to examine.

Detailing the \$7.9 million project’s design, **Moye** said that the first floor of the two-story, 43,000-square-foot building will house the offices of the tax commissioner, board of assessors and planning & codes, with the second floor housing the IT department, a county commission meeting room, the HR department and offices for the civil coordinator and facilities maintenance.

Also located on the second level will be the commission office, to include finance, payroll, safety coordinator and county manager/clerk. Continuing, he noted that Phase I of the project (a 300+ capacity parking lot and the new building’s foundation pad) has been completed, whereas Phase II will be the parking lot fronting the new administration building. Phase III, he said would include an expansion of the existing courthouse and renovations.

The estimated completion date for the overall project will be in February or March of 2019, he said. Following the program, **Moye** answered questions and was thanked by Sonny Yarbrough, February program chairman. The Waycross Kiwanis Club meets every Friday at noon at the Quality Inn & Suites.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
January 26, 2017

Waycross, Ware Commissions Join Forces

Author: Myra Thrift

Waycross and Ware County both posted good years in 2016 and elected officials on both the city and county commissions are hoping for an even better year in 2017. Waycross Mayor John Knox said at an inter-governmental meeting at Waycross and Ware County commissions Wednesday at City Hall that he looks forward to another good year and that there “are a lot of good, positive things on the forefront. I am more excited to see how the city and county are going to work together.”

Commissioners from both boards addressed the need for an overpass to help alleviate the problem of drivers having to wait on trains stopped at crossings from downtown to Jamestown. They also discussed at length the Hatcher Point Road project, which has been hampered by first one thing and then another for the last 10 to 12 years.

County Manager **Scott Moye** explained that the county had to redo some engineering recently but that the traffic count and environmental approvals are approved. He announced that if the county takes over the project to oversee, a lot of money can be saved and possibly some time.

City Commissioner Diane Hopkins noted that she called former county manager Paul Smith a year ago and was told that all of the rights-of-way had been procured and it was ready to go. “I am so disappointed. October a year ago I was told the project was ready to go,” said Hopkins. It was decided that the city’s engineer, Jessica Deal, will get on board and assist with getting the project moving once the county is ready to go out for bids.

Commissioners were reminded that the city and county designated their LMIG funds (Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant) in the hundreds of thousands and have absolutely nothing to show for it as far as the road being widened and paved.

The group agreed for the county attorney to write a letter to Georgia Department of Transportation noting that the county is ready to take over the project and to make sure the funding is in place. **Moye** said it may be within reach over the next fiscal year if all i’s are dotted and all t’s are crossed.

One point of contention with the two boards was an agreement the city has to pay Ware County Tax Commissioner Roger Collins about \$30,000 to collect city taxes. Actually, the money would be sent to the county, and then the county would be in charge of getting the money to Collins.

Raphel Maddox, city manager, reminded the group that some years ago, the two boards entered into a “gentlemen’s agreement” that the city would house the emergency medical system in

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

exchange for the \$10,200 for collection of city taxes. The agreement was oral and nothing was ever put in writing. Ware Commissioner Jerry Pope remembers the agreement as he was on the county board back then. That has been going on for years with both governments keeping their word, he said.

Knox announced that the city has completed a \$30,000 contract with Collins and it was approved by a vote of 3-2, but there are minor adjustments that have to be made.

Ware Commissioner Danny Turner, obviously not in agreement with Collins being paid \$30,000 by the city, read from a political ad that Collins published saying the job "... is not about the money. It is about serving the people.' Why does he need another \$30,000?" City commissioner Norman Davis said he is satisfied with the contract and sees no problem with paying Collins the money, as long as the city's taxes are collected.

"He is holding you hostage," Turner told him.

"We have made our decision," Knox said.

"He threatened to stop collecting our taxes," said Maddox.

"It concerns me that you give a man \$30,000 to collect your taxes," said Turner.

Maddox explained the contract specifically says the money is paid to the county as a conduit and the county makes payment to Collins. "It's a simple deal. We need someone to collect our taxes," said Knox. "And it would cost us a lot more to hire somebody else to do it."

Turner told the group he will support it but wondered: "when will it stop? I know you need your taxes collected, but it disappoints me." Davis added, "It's the lesser of two evils." "Don't let him keep strong-arming you," said Turner.

Knox assured the group, if the city has to pay more in the future, they will look for someone else. Davis then said he is thankful to Commissioner Turner for "slowing this train down."

The idea of forming a land bank was also discussed briefly. A committee is to be formed to look at the issue and make a report back to the joint commissions at the next joint meeting, which is set for April 26. Prior to the official meeting, commissioners broke bread together and enjoyed a light lunch at City Hall.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
January 10, 2017

Ware Workers Get 1 Percent Raise

Author: Myra Thrift

Ware County's loyal, hard-working, dependable and responsible employees have worked long hours and long days that dragged into months and years without a pay increase, in the heat of the summer, the freezing cold of the winter, the middle of the morning and the dead of night. Ware County commissioners Monday announced the first salary increase of the year with another to follow in July and a promise of a comparison study that will bring Ware's employees into the 21st century with competitive take-home pay as a reward for their commitment and dedication to the people of Ware County.

During the first regular meeting of the new year, commissioners voted to give the eligible full time employees a 1 percent COLA raise effective (retroactive to Jan. 1). Another 1 percent is on the way for July with a long range plan of bringing the employees' salaries up to what they deserve, said county manager **Scott Moye**. This will be the first official raise for the employees in several months but **Moye** noted it will definitely not be the last. "We plan to conduct a market study of the surrounding area, bring that back and create a program to redo the pay foundation of the county," said **Moye**. He noted that at the county commission's scheduled Feb. 27 retreat, he has hopes of putting all of this into action for the near future.

When the issue was put before the board for a vote, commissioners enthusiastically approved the motion by a unanimous 5-0 vote, with their thanks to the employees for their work and devotion. "This is my first meeting of a new term and I am anxious to go into another term," said Commissioner Jerry Pope. "I believe we will be in good shape. I appreciate this opportunity to serve the people of Ware County."

Commissioners Carlos Nelson, Danny Turner and Chairman Jimmy Brown all extended a special welcome to Pope and new commissioner Steve Barnard, both of who were elected by the people of Ware County to serve in their respective positions. "I thank the people of District 4 for allowing me to represent them," said Barnard. "I appreciate the employees and want to do all I can for them." Chairman Brown stressed that the county has the best employees possible in every department and that he is grateful for their service to the county and thankful to to the people of Ware County who allowed him to begin a third term in his seat.

In other business, commissioners gave approval for:

- the rehiring of **Scott Moye** as county manager, Tony Rowell as county attorney and Cassie Morris as county clerk.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
August 17, 2016

Moye Joins Ware's Team

Ware County has a new county manager. He's **Scott Moye**, who was accepted by a unanimous vote of county commissioners on Aug. 8 at a called meeting at the courthouse. As our page one news story of Aug. 9 pointed out, this is not **Mr. Moye's** "first rodeo" in Ware County. He previously served as an assistant to former County Managers Mike Stewart and Joe Pritchard years ago, during which time he worked as a project manager and handled such things as government grants. He was most recently a city administrator for the City of Blackshear. Judging from his commentary, **Moye** appears to be genuinely pleased with this turn-of-events, declaring on Aug 8, "I am just ecstatic about being here. I am looking forward to doing what I can to serve the citizens of Ware County."

Before his Blackshear assignment, he worked as a deputy city manager at Fernandina Beach, Fla. **Moye's** familiarity with Waycross-Ware and the greater Waycross area will enable him to "hit the ground running" at his new job as Ware County's manager. What's more, it needs to be mentioned that he's a Waycross native who grew up here, owns a home here, and is a member of Central Baptist Church in Waycross. Indeed, there will be no need to get acclimated to the "largest town, in the largest county, in the largest state east of the Mississippi River." County Manager **Moye** and his lovely wife, Amy, have two daughters, Mallory, 21, a student at South Georgia State College in Waycross; and Mollie, 18, a senior at Ware County High School. **Moye's** arrival as county manager comes at an opportune time, as both the City of Waycross and Ware County prepare to get serious about industrial development vis-a-vis the Waycross-Ware County Development Authority.

Randy Cardoza, who formerly served as commissioner of the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade & Tourism, was in Waycross last week talking to community leaders about what qualifications they think are needed for the leader of the "new development authority" envisioned by Waycross-Ware's leadership. Cardoza, who now works as a paid consultant, "traveled the country and the globe for the past 10 years seeking industry for Georgia," reported Bill Shipp of "Bill Shipp's Georgia" in April 2000. Cardoza knows what it takes to put together an organized and effective industrial development effort. Toward this end, the City of Waycross will hold its first-ever Waycross-Ware County Community and Economic Development Summit at the City Auditorium on Sept. 1 from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Attendance will be by invitation only. According to Mayor John Knox, the summit's model was "designed to bring all local parties together for the purpose of identifying priorities and development strategies that will build a strong local economy."

We're glad that **Mr. Moye** will be on board for Waycross-Ware's hoped-for industrial development renaissance. Hopefully, he will be able to recommend some good ideas when our community's political, business and financial leadership gathers at the city auditorium on Sept. 1. Welcome aboard, sir!

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://www.theblacksheartimes.com/community/midway-waiting-game-continues-boe-members-worry-water-sewer-line-expansion-may-not-be-ready/article_059c09aa-ef91-5a6e-bb2f-1b8416840733.html

Jul 15, 2009

Midway waiting game continues: BOE members worry water-sewer line expansion may not be ready when school opens

By Jason Deal - Staff Writer

Will water and sewer service be available when the new Midway School opens in August 2010? That worry was again at the forefront at last Thursday's school board work session. Board members Pat Park and Jimmy Lynn expressed concern water and sewer may not be available when the school opens. Assistant superintendent Cleve Tyre confirmed that rights-of-way for paving and water and sewer lines have not been secured. Additionally, EMC Engineering of Statesboro has expressed financial concerns about the project. Tyre expressed frustration in dealing with the county and city on the issue, but said he hoped right-of-way to extend the lines would soon be secured.

School board Chairman Mark Dixon expressed his exasperation with the whole lot. "I wonder when we'll have to start renting port-a-potties for the kids out there," he said. The school board, city and county completed two months of negotiations in May for extending the utilities to the school. In the two months since, the preliminary engineering work has been completed and the land needed for rights-of-way have been identified.

Blackshear city administrator **Scott Moye** says EMC has expressed concern about not getting paid for its work. **Moye** says there should be plenty of financing to pay EMC, using money the school board paid the county and funds from a city loan used to extend water/sewer service. "We think it will all come together," **Moye** says. "It is just the timing that makes things tight."

A meeting between Tyre, city officials and EMC is expected to take place later this week. The city is currently in the process of extending sewer service to the industrial park. That line will eventually be used to also serve Midway.

Another hold up is the county completing acquisition of rights-of-way. County attorney Franklin Rozier Jr. says he's almost completed those negotiations and only lacks closing on the parcels. "I'm working on it," he said. Rozier has been doing the work exclusively and shuttling back and between the property owners and the commission to finalize the details. "I really can't say how long it will take," Rozier said. "I would say it should be done in the next two months." Once that's done, the go-ahead will be given to EMC to finish engineering. The city will then proceed with bidding the water/sewer project.

County Chairman Jim Dennison said he thought everything was proceeding as planned. "I am unaware there's a problem," Dennison said. The chairman says he knew the right-of-way acquisition had not been completed, but didn't know the engineering work was at a standstill.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Tyre said EMC and the board’s architect, SP Designs of Macon, has said they can finish the job in time for the school opening. “The delay makes it worrisome, but it can be done,” Tyre said.

In the agreement reached back in May, the county, school board and City of Blackshear gave approval to sharing costs related to the new school. The school board will pay the county \$9,750 for clean-up at the site of the new Midway Elementary School. The county, in turn, will use that money to pay EMC for engineering fees for paving and water/sewer rights-of-way to the new school. The county will pay to secure additional rights-of-way for 80 foot easements on Youmans Road and will also grant the City of Blackshear permission to run water/sewer lines into the unincorporated areas of the county. The city will pay a small portion of the costs for right-of-way to run water-sewer lines in exchange for providing the service to the new school.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moyer
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://www.theblacksheartimes.com/community/blackshear-council-says-commissioners-didn-t-deliver-on-financial-promise/article_10dedca8-cd5f-5d03-a651-b3cec821b435.html
Oct 22, 2008

Blackshear council says commissioners didn't deliver on financial promise

By Wayne Hardy - Managing Editor

Blackshear council members weren't happy with the county's financial offer for extending water and sewer lines to the industrial park. Mayor Tom Davis reads over figures showing less than half of what the city requested in SPLOST funds for water and sewer improvements. Blackshear officials say county commissioners offered only an empty gesture last week after making what the city believed was a financial commitment eight months ago to extend water and sewer lines to the industrial park.

Commissioners told city officials they would provide \$1 million in SPLOST funds and help apply for a \$500,000 state grant toward meeting the cost of running utilities to the park. The proposal, which means the county is offering nothing from its budget to help pay for the project, has city officials crying foul. Extending utility lines to the industrial park has been an item of contention for several years, but has become more acute with the Board of Education's need to receive water and sewer service at the site of the new Midway Elementary School. Plans have called for the BOE to cover cost of carrying the utility lines from the Industrial Park to the school site, a distance of approximately a mile. That's if the utilities ever reach the industrial park, of course. The service has been talked about for years with no action taken yet.

Blackshear Mayor Tom Davis was incensed as he discussed the county's action with the city council last week, only minutes after the county's meeting. "Basically, they voted to give us back our own money and to apply for a grant that wouldn't cost them anything," said Davis. "Essentially, the county did not donate us one nickel to help with the project."

Commissioners had pledged in March to pay part of the industrial park project, though they did not commit then to a specific figure or percentage. Davis had originally asked the county to pay 72 percent of the expense, based on its share of land in the 642-acre park. County Chairman Jim Dennison has acknowledged the city's dissatisfaction and says the county will revisit the proposal at a special meeting Tuesday night (after press time). The city was also to hold a called meeting afterward.

Council members spoke mostly in disbelief this past week about what the county put on the table. The city had planned to use a portion of the sales tax revenues to repair aging sewer lines and upgrading the city's south wastewater treatment plant. With no county participation in extending utilities to the industrial park, no funds will be left for that work. "If we go with (the county's proposal), the City of Blackshear will have no water and sewer (sales tax dollars) for the next five years," Davis said. Davis repeated his concern the city would have to raise water and sewer rates yet again if the city is left to bear all the cost of extending the industrial park

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

utility services. “We have to consider the financial restrictions on our citizens and the future of what we have to do with the other things.”

City Administrator **Scott Moye** proposed the city serve as its own general contractor for the water lines in an attempt to save money, using a subcontractor only to install a well. “I know it’ll be a lot cheaper than to contract it all out,” he said.

The council grudgingly voted to accept the county’s offer and will explore doing at least a portion of the work with city manpower. Public Works Superintendent Donnie Harris was to gather cost estimates and other needs to be presented at the Tuesday meeting.

EMC Engineering of Savannah estimated the original total project cost at \$2.7 million. City officials hope to reach that figure through a combination of the SPLOST funds from the county, the state grant plus another federal grant and some funds remaining from the project that put a water tank in the park a few years ago. **Moye** says the EMC projection may be on the high end anyhow after the firm noted material prices have dropped in recent weeks.

Blackshear officials have also considered running a sewer line to a Waycross treatment station near the Satilla River, but council members say they are wary of rates that might be charged. The City of Blackshear has also agreed in principle to possibly take out a loan to cover extending lines to the school, with the school system covering the payments. Blackshear would pay to upgrade the lines to a bigger size, allowing more potential customers to hook into the system. Davis says the water and sewer project will happen, regardless, with construction possibly beginning by March

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moyer
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://www.theblacksheartimes.com/community/technicality-may-keep-city-from-onegeorgia-for-industrial-park/article_08d72ee2-7a46-5d10-bb87-2bb515f74461.html
Dec 22, 2007

‘Technicality’ may keep city from OneGeorgia \$\$\$ for industrial park

By Wayne Hardy - Managing Editor

Blackshear’s plans to expand water lines throughout the county industrial park has hit another snag. The city’s application for a OneGeorgia grant has been denied on what some city officials believe is an inaccurate detail.

City Administrator **Scott Moyer** explains the OneGeorgia Authority turned down the funding request because they believe the city's current plan is another phase of a previous OneGeorgia-funded project that brought water lines from Blackshear to the industrial park in 2005.

“They don’t pay for continuation of projects,” **Moyer** says.

The grant could have helped cover well over half the estimated \$440,000 project cost, **Moyer** adds.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://www.theblacksheartimes.com/blackshear-water-test-results-negative-for-bacteria/article_9bc8cd5a-0c8c-511c-8f6d-eaf5384b2fee.html
Aug 1, 2007

Blackshear water test results negative for bacteria

By Staff Report

City administrator **Scott Moye** announced Wednesday afternoon public works officials report bacteria test results for Blackshear's water have come back negative. The test was conducted due to the discovery of no chlorine Tuesday (July 31) in local water supplies. Chlorine is a federally required chemical added to water to prevent the growth of bacteria and micro-organisms.

Environmental specialist, Gary Reynolds, with the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) told *The Times* a sanitary survey of Blackshear's water system would be conducted Thursday. The survey will involve a complete check of the city's water system and testing documentation. While Reynolds says this incident didn't cause him to plan a visit to Blackshear, it did play a role in its timing. "The visit was scheduled for sometime this quarter," Reynolds says. "But if I had not gotten the call about this (chlorine) I probably would have delayed it."

City officials flushed the water system and replaced the missing chlorine Tuesday. The chlorine issue first arose after several customers complained their water smelled. ESG performed the initial chlorine water test and provided the city with a chlorine tank to use for the time being. The city had no chlorine on hand and none could be delivered before Thursday.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
July 19, 2007

Blackshear Council Members Explain Absences

Author: Myra Thrift

BLACKSHEAR - Bob Johnson, Charles Broady and Mary Lott Walker - elected members of the Blackshear City Council - say they are doing what the people who voted for them want - standing up for the citizens' rights. The three have been absent from some recent meetings of the city council and all three walked out of the last regular meeting, calling for a poll of the council in an effort to stop a vote on a proposal to turn the city's wastewater treatment plant, water department and public works department over to one company. They say the city can ill afford the proposed plan but all three say they fear there is a deeper motive than just taking over the city's work load. They say there is trouble coming down the turnpike if the city's water rights are not kept in tact for the citizens of Blackshear.

Johnson said he believes the three are being unfairly targeted because they have held their ground and no vote has been taken on the proposal from ESG (Environmental Services Group) of Duluth. Johnson said his water was recently turned off while he was on vacation in Florida, something he sees as pure retaliation from the city. Broady said at times he is on the road with his truck and is unable to get to the meetings, adding that he loses money in his attempts to make the called meetings. But at the heart of the issue, the three say, is a move to turn the operation of the city's three major departments over to one company, a move the three see as a detriment to the city's future needs. "We put out for bids on wastewater treatment only," Johnson said. "We had one bid from John Tindall, who is already handling the department. And we had a bid from ESG, but they want the operation of the wastewater treatment plant, the city's water plant and the public works department. That is not what we want." All three fear if the operations of the departments are turned over to ESG, the residents' water bills will increase and citizens will have problems meeting those obligations. They also have concerns for the city's long-time employees, many of whom have spoken with the council members about their concerns for their jobs and their retirement benefits. "This would be opening Pandora's Box for us," Johnson said. "We can still manage."

Walker said one of her biggest concerns is the fact that ESG is a company out of Duluth and Tindall is a local man with local ties, a man who has been doing an excellent job for the city, she said. "We had a tremendous odor problem, but since Mr. Tindall has been on the job, the odor has subsided," Walker said. "It used to smell every day and now it hardly ever smells." Broady added that over the last years, the city has outsourced everything - tax collections, tax billing, garbage pickup, accounting service. He said now the mayor and some council members want to turn over three more departments. "The only thing we will have left is the police department and fire department," Broady said. "Not one person has come to me in favor of this proposal (from ESG)," Johnson said, adding he has been contacted by many people who ask him "not to give the city away." Johnson said he has grave fears that the city of Blackshear will lose its water rights to north Georgia if controls are not kept locally. North Georgia, he said, wants the abundant supply

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

of water that south Georgia has. "Before long, the water will be going to north Georgia," Johnson said. Johnson explained his reason for asking Mayor Tom Davis to recuse himself from voting at the recent regular meeting in the event of a tie vote. Johnson said the mayor has used "intimidation" on the employees, some of which have signed complaints against the mayor for an incident that took place on Jan. 18 and another on Feb. 9. William Sauls and Glynn Gillis both signed an affidavit saying that on Jan. 18, the mayor walked into the office of Marty Clifton, former public works director, and knocked Saul's hat off. Then on Feb. 9, the two signed another complaint saying the mayor shook his finger in the face of Sauls and told him that he does "the firing and hiring" for the city of Blackshear.

Walker said a former mayor of Blackshear prevailed upon her to maintain her stand and "not give the city of Blackshear away. He told me that it is my job to look after the citizens and the city employees. He said if we turn over the public works, water department and wastewater treatment to ESG, there would be no need for a council or mayor or an office downtown. And also a former council member came to me and told me the same thing. The city workers are upset over their retirement and insurance. They are really concerned. It is our responsibility to keep our employees happy and to look after the best interest of our citizens. That's what we are elected for." Johnson recalled the situation when former police chief James Mock was having problems with the city. He said a lot of the current hostilities stem from the city's treatment of Mock.

Broadly voiced concerns over the city manager, saying they hired **Scott Moye** for his financial and budgetary expertise and "the first thing he did was hire Terry Spivey. It's scary for us to keep **Scott** on. When we are paying someone that kind of money, he should be able to handle the job and not outsource."

Johnson added that he wants the citizens of Blackshear to be made aware of what is going on behind the scenes. "This all happened so fast, and not one person has said for us to go with ESG," Johnson said. He pointed out that Tindall's bid was \$144,000, compared to ESG's bid of \$700,000. He added that Tindall has a laboratory and can do his own lab work, while ESG has to outsource its lab work to a lab in Savannah at an extra cost of \$10,000. Tindall, Johnson said, also manages operations in Darien and Pearson. He also pointed to the outsourcing of the city's garbage pickup, which he said has cost the citizens more than money, it has left them without a lot of services. "Service is what we're going to miss (with ESG)," Johnson said.

Broadly said he is not fighting with the manager or the council, but that he is trying to do the right thing by the people of Blackshear. He said he was told by a member of a rural Georgia organization to "be very careful. North Georgia needs our water. They would have the authority to make deals with north Georgia." A vote will likely come on the matter when the Blackshear City Council convenes its regular meeting in August.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://www.theblacksheartimes.com/community/city-grants-powers-of-mayor-to-scott-moye/article_5f8997e9-de91-54c0-b678-7ff08d581fe2.html
May 30, 2007

City grants powers of Mayor to Scott Moye

By DeAnn Komanecky - Managing Editor

Blackshear City Administrator **Scott Moye** will now have more control of city operations. Blackshear took the first concrete step towards a city manager form of government last week, when the city council approved the delegation of some mayoral duties to City Administrator **Scott Moye**.

The move, recommended by Mayor Tom Davis, came after discussions in April with council members at a government program retreat in Athens. Davis says he's excited about the change.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
March 8, 2007

Blackshear PD Issues Could Be Resolved At Today's 5 p.m. Meeting

James Mock, chief of the Blackshear Police Department, has been on administrative leave with pay for the past fortnight after all but one of his 12 staff members filed a formal grievance complaining about Mock's abusive managerial style.

While City Hall will not go on record about the situation, other than to confirm Mock has been suspended, the 11 employees, speaking under the condition of anonymity, told reporters that Mock routinely uses tactics of humiliation and intimidation in running the police department.

Scott Moye, city administrator, said Wednesday that the city had hoped to resolve the situation with a meeting early this week. But that plan was scuttled when Dan Bennett, the city attorney, came down with the flu.

Moye said Wednesday that the city was not likely to address the issue until Tuesday's regularly scheduled Blackshear City Council meeting because it was estimated that Bennett would be out until then. But this morning **Moye** said that the agenda of a called meeting of the council scheduled for today had been amended to include "consideration of (an) executive session for discussion of a personnel and legal matter."

An agenda for today's 5 p.m. meeting, which originally was called just to discuss wastewater treatment plant operations, also lists that "... the persons who may attend will be Mayor Tom Davis, Mayor pro-tem Charles Foreman, council members David Broady, Mary Lott Walker, Bob Johnson, Barbara Smith, Terry Tarr and City Attorney Dan Bennett."

Efforts to get city officials to go on record with comments about the allegations against Mock during the past two weeks have been futile. City council members and city employees said they were reserving comment under orders of the mayor.

Adam Ferrell, an attorney represented the disgruntled police department employees, has also declined to comment.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News Leader (Fernandina Beach, FL)
May 1, 2002

VIEWPOINT/JOHN KING WEEMS/AMELIA ISLAND
Sea oats planting worthwhile

During the city commission debate on March 26, my son John asked the candidates if they were satisfied with the present condition of our beaches. In response to his question, some of the candidates suggested a partnership with the citizens of the island for their help to protect the beaches. Judging from the large volunteer turn out on April 20 at the sea oats planting on North Beach, it is obvious that the citizens were listening.

"It's great to help out," said Orv Lind, a retired Lutheran minister from Massachusetts who lives in Ocean Reach. "Especially when the project helps the ecology of our island," said Lind. Approximately 90 to 100 people braved 90-degree heat to plant 25,000 plugs of sea oats obtained from a federally funded grant of \$25,000. The money was funneled through the state and matched in kind by support services from the city. "It's important to save the dunes. The dunes protect our beaches and also help save the endangered sea turtles," according to Maia McGuire, marine agent for the University of Florida's sea grant extension program. McGuire was instrumental in obtaining the grant money for the sea oats.

Mary Duffy, president of The Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch, explained that saving the dunes creates more habitat for sea turtles. The dunes also serve to buffer the turtles from artificial lighting along the shore. The sea turtle nesting and hatching season locally is May 1 through October 31. Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch, a nonprofit organization, monitors Amelia Island's turtle nests (mostly loggerheads), and tapes them off, posting warning signs for unsuspecting beachcombers. Both sea turtles and their nests are protected by environmental laws, and Fernandina Beach has night time beach lighting laws in effect to help protect the turtle hatchlings, which become confused by artificial light. Last season, the group marked 100 nests on the island. They are currently seeking "early risers" to help comb the beach around sunrise, for signs of nests and turtle tracks. Anyone interested in volunteering in this ecological effort, can call Mary Duffy at 261-2697.

The April 20 sea oats volunteers included members of groups and individuals alike. The large turnout of Kathy Russell's Fernandina Beach High School volunteer brigade was a real morale booster to the more "seasoned" planters. Other groups represented the Master Gardeners, The Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch, the University of North Florida, Ocean Avenue neighbors, and other citizens from the city and county as well.

Even some out of state beach goers got in on the action. Leadership was provided by Ms. McGuire and Rebecca Jordi, the Nassau County horticulture agent. **Scott Moye**, deputy city manager for the city of Fernandina Beach, coordinated the volunteer headcount, supported with lots of bottled water, and coordinated a follow-up sea oats watering program with the fire department.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The massive planting of sea oats on North Beach adds new emphasis to the prohibitions against climbing over the dunes to get on and off the beach. It is clear that as the dune protection program goes forward, the city will need to deal with the need to add more dune crossing points north of Main Beach.

The volunteers are conducting a poll regarding the building of new dune crossings and a dune learning gazebo on North Beach. Cast your votes and make comments on the World Wide Web at www.AmeliaIslandLiving.com.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News Leader (Fernandina Beach, FL)
April 19, 2002

City staff drafts business plan to regain marina's fiscal solvency

Author: Robin Campbell

The fiscal year 2000-01 financial audit of the city of Fernandina Beach, dated Feb. 6 by James Moore & Company, told city commissioners and Fernandina Harbor Marina staff what they already knew. They knew that the marina overspent its budget (by \$155,056). They knew the operating income has been steadily declining since 1999, as it is for other enterprise funds. And they knew the marina's debt service, stemming largely from the marina redevelopment project, was and will continue to keep it from having a balanced budget.

But the city now has a business plan that formally asks for the city commission's guidance as to where it wants the marina to go from here. The marina plan, produced largely by Deputy City Manager **Scott Moye** and Marina Director Coleman Langshaw, has been in development since December 2001, at the request of the city commission following a sequence of revealing and controversial reports from former Controller Harold Perry.

Unlike traditional business plans, however, the marina's does not show a direct path to fiscal health. Rather than one plan of attack, the marina plan provides the city commission variables that could have an affect on the city-run marina's operational success. It offers advice but in the end leaves it up to the commission to decide what is and is not in the best interest for the city and the many residents who frequent its marina.

Released earlier this month and delineated to the commission at the April 2 meeting, the marina business plan asks the question that Langshaw has been asking since November 2001: "What is the marina department?"

The marina is currently labeled in the budget as an enterprise fund, which means it is to be a self-supporting entity with no financial aid from city coffers, including ad valorem tax dollars. And to continue acting as an enterprise fund, the plan states, the marina "must be able to maximize its market potential, regardless of political or sentimental influences."

All commission meeting discussions regarding the marina's future have included debate on raising dockage fees. Langshaw has said each time that if the marina is to be an enterprise fund, it must raise its fees to succeed. Revenue is down, and the simplest and most effective way to equalize the operating income and the operating expenditures, coupled with the debt service, is to find a way to increase fees, City Controller Donna Mallery and City Manager Bob Mearns said. "Available transient space must be highly available. Or if this is not the case, then permanent dockage fees must be high enough to offset the loss of revenue from transient dockage and fuel sales," the plan says. "In all likelihood, only the commercial vessels would be allowed to tie up permanently, and dockage would be expensive."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

City Manager Bob Mearns, who was hired by the city commission in February, said he concurs with the assessment in the marina business plan. He said the marina must generate more revenue to offset what Mallery called unavoidable high expenditures, such as rising fuel costs. "The business plan asks for direction," Mearns said. "It tells the commission, 'If you want us to be a viable source of revenue, we've got to raise fees.'"

In addition to raising fees, Mearns said the large number of delinquent payments for dock slips must be aggressively collected. "We must make every attempt to get the money owed to the city," he said.

But one concern from Commissioner Ron Sapp and others has been that by raising the fees to that level, the community aspect of the historic marina will be compromised and many residents could feel slighted by the city's ambition to make money.

As an enterprise fund, the plan recommends that:

- The commission develop and approve an unwavering mission statement, committed to a nonpolitical, enterprise fund concept.
- The city negotiate with adjacent property owners for expansion to the north.
- If successful with securing riparian rights to land north of facility, the city should proceed with redevelopment phases 2A and 3, guaranteed by some of the city's portion of Nassau County one-cent sales tax surcharge. To offset the costs of the marina's loss of income, the city commission should approved the use of this tax.
- The city auction all surplus docks, not used in phases 2A and 3.
- The city raise all dockage fees to market value for the specific location transient to permanent ratio based on market demand.
- The city continue to lobby Nassau County to join the Florida Inland Navigation District.
- The city seek financial partnership with the Nassau County Ocean Highway and Port Authority.
- The city apply for all relevant grants.
- The city investigate possible upland development with private and public partnerships.
- The city review the business plan quarterly the first year, semiannually the second year and annually in subsequent years.

In addition to the recommendations for the "true" enterprise fund scenario, the marina business plan suggests that the city negotiate a buyout of Brett's Waterway Cafe, which sits in the center of the marina and draws a great deal of business from transient boats and residents alike. According to the plan, a lease was developed in 1997 between the city and Centre Street Restaurant Group Ltd., or CSRG, for the continued operation of Brett's. In July 2000, the plan said, CSRG approached the city with a proposal to be bought out of the lease. The commission, after much discussion over the next year, decided to defer the proposal until it received information regarding the needed repairs to the under-structure of the restaurant's building, which were estimated by Passero Associates -- an engineering firm that works closely with the city on many projects -- to cost \$265,000 to \$365,000. The plan said the city could purchase the lease at its appraised value, secure a bank loan and repay the debt from the lease payments from

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the tenant. Although the Marina Advisory Board does not endorse this idea, the plan said the purchase could prove to be a source of considerable income to the marina enterprise fund.

Another concept that has been suggested in commission meetings, first identified by Sapp, has been a "hybrid operation." In this scenario, the marina would carry the characteristics of an enterprise fund and receive money from the general fund to help offset costs. The plan still suggests, however, that the marina still exist to "make as much money as possible," in which the rules of business for a true enterprise fund apply. But if no money is to be made, as a hybrid marina, then operations -- the fee schedule -- need only to make enough money to break even. The city's general fund would then, according to the plan, pay for current and future debt service.

The recommendations for the city regarding this path are such that it:

- Run operations as an enterprise fund, with any profits carrying forward in a "depreciation account" for routine maintenance and upkeep.
- Charge market rates for transient dockage and two-thirds market rates for permanent vessels.
- Maintain equal transient-to-permanent ratios.
- Subsidize all capital improvements from sales tax or general fund resources.
- Incorporate all items of the enterprise fund concept, except the mission statement and raising all dockage fees to market value.

This model was received well by the commission the last time **Moye** brought it to the commission's attention.

Another option, presented to the commission in the business plan, is for the marina to be incorporated into one of its already existing departments, logically the Parks and Recreation Department. Once absorbed by parks and recreation, as recommended in the plan, the city would then proceed with all development subsidized by the city's general fund. It would make 75 percent of the facility for permanent vessels at two-thirds market rate and 25 percent available for transients, also at market rate.

Although it has its benefits, including providing revenue in the form of property and sales taxes, the concept of selling or leasing the marina to an outside entity is an unpopular one. Regardless, the plan accounts for the possibility and provides recommendations as a viable scenario. It does, however, identify the political difficulties that have already been seen and could be seen again as a sold or leased operation. Again, the plan calls for an absolutely clear and unwavering mission, in which political and sentimental influences are not present. If the city were to decide to sell the marina, the plan recommends that it do so -- keeping the marina as is -- at a discounted price to pay off existing debt service, or invest general fund money to improve the marina and then sell it at market value. If leasing becomes the choice, the city would be best served, the plan says, leasing it as is for 40 years at appraised value with a negotiated percentage of gross revenue or leasing it with improvements at appraised value with similar negotiations.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

While marina's the fate will be left up to the commission to decide, Mearns said that on face value, the marina business plan is a well-written document, which reflects exactly what the city commission requested and is "very reflective of what the situation is and what needs to happen." "It's conclusions are right on," Mearns said.

The marina, however, is just one aspect of the budget. And to help the commission realize the city's full potential in budget writing and adhering to its limitations, commissioners were scheduled at last night's commission meeting to hear a proposal from First Southwest Company, an investment bank, to provide financial advisory services to the city. At press time, the substance of the presentation was uncertain, but all the commissioners received a copy of the proposal at the April 2 meeting.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
January 30, 2002

Authority's problems run deep Fernandina Beach: City helping with corrections

Author: Derek L. Kinner

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development officials have told Fernandina Beach leaders that a recently released report critical of the city's Public Housing Authority are "just the tip of the iceberg." Meanwhile, Nassau Neighbors has learned the authority still had not adopted a 2002 budget by Friday, even though the fiscal year began Jan. 1. And there were no financial records available from 2001.

Acting City Manager **Scott Moye** said he has met with HUD officials and told them the city is ready to do whatever is necessary to correct the numerous problems cited in the report, issued in mid-January. "They told me it's a bad problem, but it's a problem that can be fixed," **Moye** said. "There are other things they have to look at."

The report, written after a one-week review in November, found numerous problems, including a lack of control over spending, failure to follow correct procedures for deciding which families should get the next available housing, failure by the authority board to adequately oversee operations, failure by the executive director to document expenditures and failure to do criminal background checks on prospective tenants. The report also said authority Executive Director Jack Stalnaker must repay more than \$33,000 he received by cashing in unused annual and sick leave.

The Housing Authority oversees 125 units in Fernandina Beach and across Nassau County. It assumed county residences when the county's authority shut down. Eligible low-income tenants generally pay about 30 percent of their incomes for rent. About half the units owned are in Fernandina Beach. Most are duplexes, though there are some four- and five-bedroom houses. The other units are privately owned homes in Nassau County that pre-qualified clients can rent. Once the authority inspects the place the tenant wants to rent and approves it, the tenant pays 30 percent of his or her income; the federal government pays the rest.

Stalnaker said last week that many problems cited in the HUD report have been corrected. In a statement released late last week, HUD officials said they were working with the authority to correct the problems. "Our foremost concern is for the residents of the public housing program," the officials said. "The office is currently working very closely with the agency, providing daily technical assistance to them, in an effort to ensure that the agency's operation comes into full compliance with HUD regulations."

While the Fernandina Beach City Commission appoints members of the Housing Authority board of commissioners, the authority board appoints the executive director and is directly responsible for authority operations. Stalnaker served on the board until fellow board members appointed him executive director in 1989.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Moye said he has offered to work with the authority to make sure the agency gets back into compliance. "I met with HUD officials in Jacksonville and let them know the city of Fernandina Beach will do whatever is necessary to rectify this problem," **Moye** said. HUD officials said they are counting on the housing authority board to make sure corrections are made. "We will look to it to fulfill its obligations to ensure the integrity of the operation," the officials said.

But they also want an increased supervisory role by city commissioners. "Since the mayor is the appointing authority of the board, we will work with the mayor to increase the city's oversight of the board's responsibility," the statement said. HUD officials said they could take several actions if problems continue. "Upon determining that a substantial default exists, HUD may initiate any interventions deemed necessary to maintain decent, safe and sanitary dwellings for residents, including but not limited to providing technical assistance, assuming possession and operational responsibility for all or part of the PHA, selecting an administrative receiver to manage and operate all or part of the PHA, and petitioning the court for the appointment of a judicial receiver," the statement said.

Moye said correcting the problems is one of his top priorities. "It is a very unfortunate situation," **Moye** said. "My job as city manager is to assist them and tell them what they need to know."

Housing Authority board Chairwoman Isabell Sturges said the board had an indication things weren't going so well with the authority but didn't know how bad it was. The board now hopes to correct the situation, she said. "I was not really aware that we weren't following the procedures," Sturges said. "We are trying to address them as quickly as we can and get them back a report."

HUD said one of the problems is a lack of diversity on the board. All members are retired, and there is only one African-American serving on the five-person board. "We are all up in age," Sturges said. "I'm an 80-year-old lady. I'm trying to serve my time the best I know how. We are doing everything we can to try and correct the problem."

Sturges said her term ends in February, and she's not sure she wants to be reappointed. "As I said, I'm up in age and I'm not going to be able to continue at some point," she said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
November 21, 2001

Residents want a farmers market Fernandina: City staff wary of proposal

Author: Dickie Anderson

Despite a city staff recommendation against it, Fernandina Beach city commissioners still are keeping an open mind about participating in a proposed farmers market in Central Park. A group of citizens determined to bring a market to the city stated their case before city commissioners at their Nov. 6 meeting. Central Park on Atlantic Avenue is under the jurisdiction of the city Parks and Recreation department, so the city must be involved if that location is used.

Before the meeting, interim City Manager **Scott Moye** recommended against city participation in the proposed farmers market. **Moye** said in a letter that although he thought the idea an excellent one, a market should be operated by a private group.

Moye said he was concerned that about several issues, including the legal implications of volunteers working on behalf of the city, parking availability, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and if there would be a loss of recreational area.

The market would operate Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.. Under the residents' proposal, it would be staffed by volunteers, with the help of the city. All revenue generated would go to the city to offset any expenses and to enhance Central Park.

City Commissioner Bob Rogers placed the item on the agenda and asked Eileen Moore, who represented the citizens group proposing the market, to explain the project. Before the meeting, Moore said she hoped her group and the city could work together. "We aren't trying to fight city hall," Moore said. "We just want to work together."

Moore told commissioners the market would be a place for people to meet on Saturday mornings for a cup of coffee, to pick out fresh vegetables, check out new plants and let children play on the swings. The market also would attract visitors to the island businesses and shops, she said. Moore said the market would not be a flea market like the one on Pecan Park Road in Jacksonville.

When Mayor Kim Page asked if the market might affect other uses of the park, Moore presented a plan that showed that the proposed area is not being used for recreational activities. Moore said she and her committee have visited other farmers markets in places like Winter Park, St. Augustine, Atlantic Beach and Brunswick, Ga., and talked with operators of others. Twenty of the 30 they talked with had partial or complete city involvement. "Our market will not succeed without the city," she said.

When asked if a private group could step up and handle the market, Moore said the committee had determined that liability insurance for the market could be covered by the city at no

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

additional cost, but if a private group ran it, the insurance would be so expensive that the market could not operate.

Tommy Purvis, director of the Parks and Recreation Department, said he supports Moore's plan and told commissioners he saw no reason his department couldn't handle the challenges the market might present.

Commissioner Patricia Thompson expressed enthusiasm for the idea and encouraged the commission to continue to look at the proposal.

Commissioners agreed to discuss the proposal again after the committee reviews a contract that would spell out the city's involvement.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
November 3, 2001

Manatees cause stir in harbor Fernandina: Marina improvements planned

Author: Allison Schaefers

While people enjoy the manatees that frolic in Amelia Island's waters, the 1,000-plus-pound mammals are causing an conundrum at the Fernandina Harbor Marina. A debate is brewing between environmentalists and advocates of improvements at the facility. The environmentalists say improvements could endanger manatees. Expansion supporters say improvements are needed to attract tourism and make the facility more solvent. They also disagree that manatees would be harmed.

It's not uncommon for the marina to attract manatees traveling along the Amelia River. They often come into the docks looking for fresh water leaking from hoses, or spartina grasses growing along the banks. Marine researcher and manatee expert Mark Silva, who founded the Amelia Island Manatee Education program, said that providing a way for larger and more high-speed boat traffic to come in and out of the Fernandina Harbor Marina could endanger the manatees that live and eat there.

But for years, the sight of the exposed silt at the Fernandina Harbor Marina at low tide has dogged Fernandina Beach officials, residents and boaters. The marina's improvement plan is designed to restore the natural flow of the tides and currents and eventually wash away the silt. The marina is searching for a way to complete the second phase of a three-part redevelopment project to redesign some of the docks and repair others. The breakwater dock, the longest one on the outside of the marina, has been lengthened, and several new docks have been added to the north portion of the marina. Marina plans call for removing the inside slips and replacing them with a dock parallel to the breakwater. Installing a fixed bulkhead has also been discussed, but Marina Director Coleman Langshaw said financial problems have put that part of the project on hold.

The marina received permits to do the project in 1999, but Silva said the permit was issued before a federal lawsuit tightened manatee regulations. More restrictions are needed to protect the slow-moving creatures from injuries and death in collisions with boats, he said. Silva said that expanding the marina to make it wide enough to accommodate large yachts could endanger manatees. He plans to present his concerns to Fernandina Beach city commissioners. "It's like running a truck stop on the backs of the manatees," he said of the marina's redevelopment plan. "We need to give the manatees a break. They've survived 50 million years."

The marina's expansion plan is supposed to decrease the number of boats in mudslips, but it actually will increase traffic from large yachts, Silva said. And if a bulkhead is installed, it could drive manatees out of the marina, he added.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Kevin Little, dockmaster at Fernandina Harbor Marina, said the city marina's plan has been approved by all the required environmental agencies. He said that, if anything, the plan will reduce the number of boats and give the manatees more room to move around. "I don't see that if the marina is redesigned it will be any more obtrusive to the manatees than it is now," he said. Silva disagrees, saying that the only reason the plan got permitted in the first place was because the state was misled. "They said the plan would reduce the number of slips from 148 to 72, but, actually, the plan has the capacity to double or triple the traffic by accommodating larger yachts," Silva said.

Little said that he doesn't know of any documented problems with manatees at the city marina, but there are plenty of better places for the mammals to go. "They aren't forced to come to the marina, and it's not necessarily the best place for them," he said. "They would do better in the natural creeks and bays where the water is deeper and there is less traffic." Little said making the marina more attractive to manatees is not necessarily the most environmentally friendly action the city could take. "Manatees will survive better if we don't do stupid things and encourage them to come to places where they aren't safe," he said.

Fernandina Beach's interim city manager, **Scott Moye**, said the city is waiting for Silva to present officials with his concerns. "We've got time to address any concerns," **Moye** said. "The marina is not in financial shape to expand right now."

Moye said marina officials are trying to find ways to finance improvements since the drop in tourism following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. A bout of cold weather also took its toll on business at the facility. "They need to be more solvent [before spending money on improvements]," **Moye** said.

Silva said the city needs to attract tourism by bolstering the environment. The marina doesn't bring direct revenues to the city, he said. "People will come to see our leatherback turtles, our right whales and the manatees," he said. "That's the kind of tourism that we want. This animal is a national treasure and we need to take care of it."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times Union
October 6, 2001

Officials Look for New City Manager

Author: Derek L. Kinner

Another week, another city manager. Well, not exactly, but sometimes it seems like it. Fernandina Beach City Manager Andy Barton's resignation became effective Sept. 28, and **Scott Moye**, the deputy city manager, took over the position on an interim basis beginning Monday.

Meanwhile, city officials still are trying to decide how to look for a new permanent manager. A plan to appoint a panel of residents to help in the search has, at least temporarily, fallen apart after questions about possible public meetings law violations cropped up.

Barton, who served as city manager since March 2000, received an annual salary of \$70,000.

Commissioners have gotten information packets from two people interested in becoming city manager.

Charles A. "Tony" Hammond, a Fernandina Beach native who is town manager of North Topsail Beach, N.C., and Terry Leary, who most recently was town manager of Lake Park, have expressed interest.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
April 25, 2001

Outbursts lead to controller's dismissal Fernandina Beach: Dickerson fired despite a good evaluation

Author: Derek L. Kinner

A few days before she was fired earlier this month, former Fernandina Beach city controller Cindy L. Dickerson was given an evaluation that said her work performance "exceeds requirements." But in the end, it was the way she dealt with other city officials that led to the dismissal, according to city documents. Dickerson did not return several telephone calls to her home.

City Manager Andy Barton said he could not comment on Dickerson's firing, but in city public records, Barton said he gave Dickerson, who was making a little over \$50,000 annually, the March 30 evaluation and said he was recommending her for a 2 1/2 percent raise. He said he told Dickerson that he had been impressed that she was trying hard to get along with other city employees in the past few months, despite problems in the past.

But then Dickerson "exploded in anger," according to notes Barton filed after the evaluation. Dickerson told Barton she deserved a 5 percent raise, even though the highest raise employees could receive without City Commission approval was 4 percent, and that she should have been appointed to the deputy city manager's position when it was filled in 2000. She said that because she was not appointed, it cost her \$10,000 in salary, according to documents.

Barton said in the documents that he was stunned by her reaction and agreed to reconsider whether any adjustments should be made to the evaluation. Other city employees said in written statements that they were standing outside Barton's office and could hear Dickerson as she talked in a loud voice, saying she did not respect Barton and that she should have gotten a larger raise. Barton did make an adjustment to the evaluation. During a follow-up meeting on April 5, he fired Dickerson. He documented the meeting in notes that were filed as public documents. "I indicated to Cindy that she had a long history of interpersonal conflicts within this organization," Barton said. "I then said that she had been counseled about this on a number of occasions. . . . I indicated that in 27 years of working in the public sector that I had never been treated as discourteously, disrespectfully, and unprofessionally."

Barton said that even during her own evaluation meeting, she was complaining about another employee. "In addition, the fact that she appeared at her own performance evaluation with a document demanding that I take action against another city employee who does not report to me, was symbolic of the interpersonal conflicts that have marked her employment with the City," Barton said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Barton said he then told Dickerson it was in the best interests of the city that they part company. He gave her 90 minutes to gather her belongings and vacate City Hall and told her he would look into a severance package.

Documents pertaining to Dickerson's firing indicate a contentious relationship between her and other employees in the past. In July, Dickerson filed a sex discrimination complaint against the city, saying she was bypassed for the position of deputy city manager because of her gender. **Scott Moye** was hired.

In September, according to notes filed by Barton, Dickerson came to his office and said she wanted to inform him confidentially that she thought one of his male employees had sexually harassed one of her female Finance Department employees. Dickerson told Barton that the woman described an incident to her in which the man said something that the woman thought was inappropriate.

Barton said he asked the male employee about the accusation and that he was "stunned" and said it never happened. Barton said the woman who Dickerson said was harassed also came to him and said the incident never happened. "I have met with the alleged victim, and, based on her comments, have concluded that no incident of sexual harassment has occurred," Barton wrote.

Nassau Neighbors is not identifying the employees because of the finding of no wrongdoing. Dickerson brought a memo to her employee evaluation complaining that City Clerk Mary Mercer told one of her employees that Dickerson was "difficult to work with." Dickerson said in the memo that she thought the statement was inappropriate and might have been made in retaliation for her sex discrimination complaint.

The employee signed a statement about the incident, according to a memo Barton sent to city commissioners. Mercer denied that she had made the statement, Barton said in the memo. The employee who said Mercer made the statement later said she was on medication for an injury and did not realize what she was signing. "She stated that she regretted signing the document because she wasn't sure what it meant," **Moye** wrote in notes filed April 5 after speaking with Barton and the employee. There were several other memos from Dickerson in which she questioned procedures by other departments.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Scott Moye
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Florida Times-Union
July 29, 2000

Column: Talk of the town

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Scott Moye** is listed below.]

Before becoming Fernandina Beach's city manager, Andy Barton served as deputy city manager. CQ. Now, Barton has hired his own deputy. **Scott Moye** is scheduled to begin work Monday.

Moye comes to town from Waycross, Ga., where he most recently worked as comptroller for The Jones Co., which runs Walker-Jones Chevrolet, Buick, Olds, Honda & Toyota Inc.

Barton said he will schedule a reception once **Moye** starts work.

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