AGENDA
REGULAR SCHEDULE MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY
OF WALKER COUNTY, GEORGIA
OFFICE OF THE WALKER COUNTY COMMISSIONER
COURTHOUSE ANNEX I, 101 SOUTH DUKE STREET
LAFAYETTE, GEORGIA 30728

Date & Time:	Thursday, January 26, 2017, 6:30 p.m.
Call to Order:	Commissioner Whitfield will call the meeting to order.
Invocation:	
Pledges:	United States Flag Georgia Flag
Minutes:	Approval of the minutes from the Commissioner's Meeting on Thursday January 12, 2017.
New Business:	The Commissioner will present a Resolution declaring property of the Walker County Sherriff's Office as unserviceable surplus and remove from the county inventory, see attached Exhibit A and Exhibit B.
Adjournment:	The Business Meeting will be adjourned, and the Public Hearing will be called to order.
	The Commissioner will consider the Conditional Use Variance on property located at 1834 Old LaFayette Road, Rock Spring GA 30739 (Tax Parcel #0-326-019A) Current Zoning is R2. This request is for this purpose is so that Mr. McConathy may continue to work on lawn mower repairs. The second hearing for this was advertised in the Walker County Messenger as being held at the January 26, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. at the Commissioners meeting, see attachment, Exhibit C. This request has been submitted to the Commissioner for final approval.
Adjournment:	The Public Hearing will be adjourned.
Open Discussion:	The Business and Public Hearing being completed, commissioner Whitfield will open the floor for general discussion.

Walker County Governing Authority
Office of the Commissioner

101 South Duke Street, P.O. Box 445
LaFayette, GA 30728
706-638-1437

Minutes of Regular Meeting
January 12, 2017 @ 6:30 pm

I. Call To Order at 6:30 pm by Sole Commissioner Shannon Whitfield
Present: Sign In Sheet Attached
Staff: Larry Brooks, Robin Rogers, Becky Wooden and Greg McConnell

II. Invocation by Commissioner Whitfield

III. Leading of the United States and Georgia Pledges by Larry Brooks

IV. Commissioner Whitfield approved the minutes from 1/10/17, special called commissioner's meeting. He made copies available to the public.

V. Commissioner Whitfield heard a request from resident Johnny Noblitt to increase codes enforcement throughout the county. Commissioner Whitfield explained his plan to increase the staff of codes enforcement providing much needed assistance to the county's only codes enforcement officer, Becky Beason.

VI. Commissioner Whitfield appointed a new member to Walker County Planning Commission Board, Robert "Bob" Foster of Chickamauga. Foster will fill the seat left empty by the passing of J.B. Lemons. This term will expire 12/31/2019.

V. Commissioner Whitfield executed documents prepared by county attorney Robin Rogers to begin the process of securing temporary county financing (Tax Anticipation Note) from the Bank of LaFayette. The bank committed to providing $4 million to the county as a line of credit for operations. Commissioner Whitfield said based on projections provided by financial officer Greg McConnell the county would need another $4million to get through 2017, bringing the combined total to $8 million. Commissioner Whitfield explained the bank committed to assessing the county's financial situation this summer to see if it would provide further funding.

VI. Commissioner Whitfield adjourned the regular commissioner's meeting at 7:19 pm.

VII. Commissioner Whitfield asked for discussion from the floor.

A. Citizen asked how Commissioner Whitfield planned on not letting the county over extend its financial obligations in the future. Commissioner responded by saying he planned to keep a close watch on spending and limit the number of projects that he will commit to doing at a given time. He also explained he was working closely with the Walker County Development Authority to find a viable financial solution for Mountain Cove Farms. Commissioner Whitfield went on to explain he had already found cost savings which amounted to roughly $660,000 annually by cutting some positions within the county. He went on to add he was looking at better management practices that could be applied to the landfill which could cut costs of operations there.

B. Question was asked about better communication with the public. Commissioner Whitfield explained he was hiring a full time public relations coordinator, Joe Legge. He begins who work on January 19. This position will provide press updates and will keep track of open records request and will do follow up with citizens when they have concerns.

C. Question was asked by Jim Pope concerning the total debt of Walker County. Commissioner Whitfield explained there were audits being performed now that will be used to determine the total debt of the county. He further explained he would provide quarterly financial reports to citizens via the county website.

D. Question was asked about deterioration of roads within the county. Commissioner Whitfield explained SPLOST money purposed for road maintenance was used on the new industrial park.

E. Question was asked about the need for large emergency trucks rolling on every call and during routine maintenance duty. Commissioner Whitfield explained he was taking a look at the use of smaller vehicles for some responses which would cut back on fuel and repair expenses. He went on to say he hoped to have a full time emergency crew in the North end of the county at some point soon in the future.

F. Commissioner Whitfield was asked about the reality of economic development projects for the county. Commissioner Whitfield said he was working closely with the Walker County Development Authority and was encouraged by the level of interest that businesses have in the county.

G. Question was asked about the legality of the county borrowing money from the Walker County Water and Sewerage Authority. Commissioner responding by saying he felt that the

transaction should have been made public. He explained whether the transaction was legal or not he felt there was a moral responsibility to the citizens to have a transaction such as this be made known.

H. Commissioner Whitfield expressed his appreciation to the Rossville Homeowner's Association for its work in trying to bring revitalization to its community and explained the group was looking for projects in Rossville to provide support for.

_____ _____

Sole Commissioner Shannon Whitfield Date Approved

Note: These minutes were prepared by WCDA Executive Director, Larry Brooks.

Exhibit A

MEMO

To: Walker County Commissioner

From: Sheriff Steve Wilson SBW

Date: 01-13-2017

Subject: Surplus equipment

Please declare the following equipment unserviceable surplus and remove from the county inventory. This equipment will be destroyed.

1. Copier Canon IR330S manufacture 2001 serial number NQJ59603

Exhibit B

TO : COMMISSIONER SHANNON WHITFIELD
FROM : SHERIFF STEVE WILSON
DATE : JANUARY 7, 2017
SUBJECT : UNSERVICEABLE SURPLUS EQUIPMENT

Steve Wilson

Attached is a list and photograph of property currently assigned to the Walker County Sheriff's Office that is unusable, unserviceable and surplus. I am requesting that you declare this property unserviceable as provided by law and allow it to be disposed of according to law.

DELL DESKTOP 6MPR2FA
DELL DESKTOP 78V50L1
DELL DESKTOP OPTIPLEX 760 NX/0
DELL DESKTOP B6KJ691
DELL DESKTOP 4F0JB71
DELL DESKTOP HJJ3871
DELL DESKTOP 883TN81
DELL POWER CONNECT 2216
DELL DESKTOP 6HX50L1
DELL 12 INCH MONITOR
DELL 12 INCH MONITOR
ACER 12 INCH MONITOR
DELL DESKTOP F1F0481
FASTBLOC LE CASE ONLY
HP LASERJET 1200 SERIES

Exhibit C

The second hearing for this was advertised as being held January 26, 2017 at 6:30 at the Commissioner's meeting.

Exhibit C

OBITUARIES

Max Alexander Wilson III, 31, Tunnel Hill

Max Alexander Wilson III, of Tunnel Hill, Ga., passed away Thursday, Dec. 1, 2016. He was 31.

He was a lifelong resident of the area. Max attended Ringgold High School where he was a member of the R.O.T.C.

Max Wilson III

He was a jack-of-all-trades but the master of none. He had a smile that would light up the room and his heart was even bigger than his captivating smile. Known for his unwitting humor, once when asked to put oil in the car he politely did so by placing the oil in the front seat.

Survivors include: His parents, Nita and Kevin Bowlen of Ringgold, Ga., and Max Wilson II of Trion, Ga.; grandparents, Max and Marsha Wilson of Trion and Charles and Connie McCurdy of Summerville, Ga., and sister, Autumn Keith of Summerville.

Visitation: Wednesday, Dec. 7, from 5 p.m. until the service, at the funeral home.

Memorial service: Wednesday, Dec. 7, at 7 p.m. in the funeral home chapel.

Online guest book at wilsonfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements: Wilson Funeral Home Wallis-Stewart Chapel Ringgold.

Donna Jean Hands Eagle, 70, LaFayette

Donna Jean Hands Eagle, of LaFayette, Ga., passed away Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2016. She was 70.

She was born in Geneva, Ohio to the late Samuel and Grace Lewis Hands. She was a former resident of Marietta, Ga. where she worked at Lockheed Aircraft for 18 years. She was a very talented and independent woman, which made her the first female mechanic for Sears & Roebuck in Ohio. She was a former supervisor for The Habitat for Humanity where she had an all-female crew.

She enjoyed raising American Saddlebred horses and rappelling. She was very talented in woodworking and had made several pieces of furniture. She had the extraordinary ability to make her imagination come to life.

Survivors include: Her children, David (Mary) Dopp of LaGrange, Ga., Denelle (Robert) Miller, Darien (Pamela) Dopp all of Newnan, Ga.; brother, Samuel Hands Jr., of Maine; grandchildren, Alicia Nance, Daniel Miller, Michael Dopp, Patrick Miller, Elizabeth Miller, Jason Kelly, Jennifer Kelly; great-grandchildren, Nevan Primavera, Marissa Dopp, Nathen Dover, Nevaeh Dover, Mason Dopp, Joey Flournoy and Rosalie Kelly.

Online guestbook available at wilsonfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements: Wilson Funeral Homes LaFayette Chapel.

Barbara Jean Phillips Green, 70, Ringgold

Barbara Jean Phillips Green, of Ringgold, Ga., passed away Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2016. She was 70.

She was a lifelong resident of the North Georgia, Chattanooga area.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Hubert and Frances Louise Hicks Phillips; two sisters, Patty Fargo and Debbie Timms and two brothers, Michael and Steve Phillips.

Survivors include: Her husband, Jimmy Green of Ringgold; two children, Michael Shane (Robin) Green of Tunnel Hill, Ga., and Crystal Gayle Green of Ringgold; sister, Carolyn Smith of Rossville, Ga.; six grandchildren, Candace Smith, Matthew Bubba Gibson, Autumn Green, Rowen Green, Savanna Green and Tristan Green; two great-grandchildren, Liam and Lilly Saylor and several nieces and nephews.

Private services will be held at a later date.

Online guest book at wilsonfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements: Wilson Funeral Home Wallis-Stewart Chapel Ringgold.

Judy Ann Bartlett, 58, LaFayette

Judy Ann Bartlett, of LaFayette, Ga., passed away Friday, Dec. 2, 2016. She was 58.

She was preceded in death by her parents, William Franklin Bartlett and Patsy Ruth Forrest Jarett; grandsons, Tanner Dennison and Donnie Hines; great-grandson, Koulton Sweet and uncle, James Forrest.

Survivors include: Her daughter, Serena Hines of LaFayette; son, Josh (Deanna) Hines of Summerville, Ga.; sister, Sherry (Rodney) Liles of LaFayette; brother and William Eugene (Jackie) Bartlett of Rock Spring, Ga.; grandchildren, Tabatha Sweet, Desiree Hines, Chesley Williams, Dana Asher, Farrah Hines, April Hines, Alexis Sluder, Jordyn Sluder and Trinity Sluder and several nieces and nephews.

Visitation: Monday, Dec. 5, from 6-9 p.m. at the funeral home.

Funeral service: Tuesday, Dec. 6, at 2 p.m. at Wilbanks Memorial Chapel.

Burial: Moon-Jones Cemetery.

Pallbearers: Clint Chapman, Eugene Bartlett, Josh Hines, Rodney Liles, Cody Forrest and Michael Forrest.

Online guestbook available at wallis-wilbanksfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements: Wallis-Wilbanks Funeral Home, LaFayette.

Robert Allen Waters, 73, LaFayette

Robert Allen Waters, of LaFayette, Ga., passed away Friday, Dec. 2, 2016. He was 73.

He was born in LaFayette May 24, 1943, to the late John and Lillian Waters.

Robert was of the Baptist faith and a member of Oakwood Baptist Church. He retired from Mueller Company in 2007. He was dearly loved by his family and friends.

He was Uncle Bucket to many of his nieces and nephews and served as a Godly influence. He had an infectious smile that would light up any room and to know him was to love him. He enjoyed fishing and spending time with his wife and family vacations.

Along with his parents, Robert was preceded in death by his brother, J.C. Waters and sister, Louise Holder.

Survivors include: His loving wife, Sylvia Waters of LaFayette; brothers, Frank Waters of Louisville, Ky., Charles Waters of Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., Mack (Lois) Waters of Rock Spring, Ga., and Doyle (Carol) Waters of Chickamauga, Ga.; sister-in-law, Vivian Waters of LaFayette and several nieces and nephews.

Visitation: Sunday, Dec 4, from 4-8 p.m. and Monday at Oakwood Baptist Church from 3 p.m. until time of service at the funeral home.

Funeral services: Monday, Dec. 5, at 6 p.m. at Oakwood Baptist Church.

A private burial will take place Tuesday in LaFayette Memory Gardens.

Pallbearers: Jason Cook, James Bradley, Brent Burrell, Mike Waters, Taylor Oliver, Bruce Asher and Jeremy Gravely.

Online guestbook available at wallis-wilbanksfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements: Wallis-Wilbanks Funeral Home, LaFayette.

Robert Bob William Ferrell, 73, Ringgold

Robert Bob William Ferrell, of Ringgold, Ga., passed away Friday, Dec. 2, 2016. He was 73.

He was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Samuel Ferrell and Jettie Jewell Foster Ferrell; sister, Wanda Ferrell and brother-in-law, Leon McGaha.

Survivors include: His loving wife of 52 years, Judy Ferrell; daughters, Sabrina Ferrell and Natalie Ferrell Hunt; sisters, Ann (Bud) Holcomb and Sylvia McGaha; grandchildren, J.J. Hunt and Heather Buffington; nieces, Cindy (Keith) Davis, Robin (Tim) Boe, Dana (Gary) Chapman and Angie (Doug) Ingram; nephew, Rick Holcomb and several great-nieces and nephews.

Visitation: Monday, Dec. 5, from 1 p.m. at the funeral home until time of service.

Funeral services: Monday, Dec. 5, at 3 p.m. in the Wilbanks Memorial Chapel with Don Richie and Andy Lawrence officiating.

Burial: LaFayette City Cemetery.

Online guestbook available at wallis-wilbanksfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements are by Wallis-Wilbanks Funeral Home, LaFayette.

Charles Randy Cochran, 64, LaFayette

Charles Randy Cochran, of LaFayette, Ga., passed away Monday, Dec. 5, 2016. He was 64.

He was a member of Harbor Lights Baptist Church. Randy worked for Hutcheson Medical Center EMS.

He was preceded in death by his parents, W.H. Cochran and Jean Mullinax Cochran.

Survivors include: His loving wife, LouAnne Cochran of LaFayette; daughters, Aranda (Marty) Smith of Cleveland, Tenn., Jennifer (Mickey) Schrader and Hayley Cochran all of LaFayette; sons, Chad (Jennifer) Cochran of Smithfield, N. C. and Terence Cochran of LaFayette; sister, Jannell (Jim) Dodson of McCaysville, Ga.; brother, Barry (Cindy) Cochran of Cleveland and several nieces and nephews.

Visitation: Wednesday, Dec. 7, from 4-9 p.m. and Thursday at Harbor Lights Baptist Church from noon until time of service at the funeral home.

Funeral services: Thursday, Dec. 8, at 2 p.m. at Harbor Lights Baptist Church with Pastor Jim Powell officiating.

Burial: McIntyre Cemetery.

Pallbearers are friends and family. Honorary pallbearers are the former personnel of Hutcheson EMS.

Online guestbook available at wallis-wilbanksfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements are by Wallis-Wilbanks Funeral Home, LaFayette.

Robert Bobby Clark, 56

Robert Bobby Clark, of Ringgold, Ga., passed away Friday, Dec. 2, 2016, in his home. He was 56.

Robert Clark

Bobby was born in Ringgold Aug. 3, 1960. He was fond of automotive works and carpentry.

He was preceded in death by his father, Alvin and brothers, David and Garry.

Survivors include: His wife, Mary; daughters, Jessica (Jared) Oliver and Candice (Brad) Spurlock and mother, Georgia.

Private services for the family will be held in honor of his life and good works.

Ralph Bo Newberry Jr., 62, Rock Spring

Ralph Bo Newberry Jr., of Rock Spring, Ga., passed away Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2016. He was 62.

Bo was retired from T.J. Hunt trucking company.

He was preceded in death by his father, Humpy Newberry; brothers, Bill and Jamie Newberry and father-in-law, Gerald Wilson.

Survivors include: His loving wife of 26 years, Vickie Newberry of Rock Spring; son, Seth (Sara) Newberry and granddaughter, Huntley Newberry all of Chickamauga; sister, Pat (Bobby) Prescott of Ringgold; mother-in-law, Nancy Wilson of Rock Spring; sister-in-law, Ellen Newberry of LaFayette and several nieces and nephews.

Visitation: Friday, Dec. 9, from 5-9 p.m. at the funeral home.

Funeral services: Saturday, Dec. 10, at 2 p.m. at Wilbanks Memorial Chapel with Pastor Tim Dennison officiating.

Burial: LaFayette Memory Gardens.

Pallbearers are Tony Swafford, Billy Coulter, David Johnson, Scotty Newberry, Brody Wallin and Doug Dilbeck.

Online guestbook available at wallis-wilbanksfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements are by Wallis-Wilbanks Funeral Home, LaFayette.

John Richard Holtz Sr.

John Richard Holtz, Sr. (10/6/1949-11/30/2016).

Mr. Holtz was born to Leo and Inez Holtz in Phoenix, Ariz.

John Holtz, Sr.

He was raised Southern Baptist.

John studied at the University of Miami and Metro Dade Community College. He also graduated from Miami Military Academy, Broward Police Academy and FLDC Academy. He put his college studies on hold to enlist in the U.S. Army in order to serve in the Vietnam War, enlisting on the day of his 20th birthday. He trained and served as a rotary wing pilot and flight school instructor. He piloted a Cobra attack helicopter, with his call sign being Cobra 13.

John's career was extensive with the bulk of his work being in military and law enforcement. His work included: NRA Police Firearms Instructor, Sheriff's Deputy Miami-Dade County, Police officer, City of Hallandale Beach, Federal Police Officer, Miccosukee Indian Tribe, Marine Mechanic and more. John lived in Miami and Madison, Fla., Ala., Texas, S.C., La., Ga., Ala. and Tenn. His work brought him near many interesting people over the years, such as Beatle Paul McCartney as well as the tribal community.

Obituaries, page A3

PUBLIC NOTICE
WALKER COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, January 12th, 2017 at 7:00 P.M.
Walker County Civic Center
Rock Spring, GA 30739

The Walker County Planning Commission will meet and review the following requests:

New Business:

Conditional Use Variance:

1. James McCoosthy requests a conditional use variance for property located at 1834 Old LaFayette Road, Rock Spring, GA. 30739. Tax maps: 0-326-019A.

The final hearing on the rezone will be held on January 26, 2017 at 3:00PM at the Walker County Commissioners Office located at 101 South Duke Street, LaFayetteGA. 30728

For further information please call Walker County Planning & Development at 706-638-4048.

PUBLIC NOTICE
AUCTION

Walker County will have a public auction for surplus property on December 22, 2016, at 10:00 a.m., at the Walker County Road Department, 91 Industrial Drive, Chickamauga, Georgia. The items for sale can be viewed anytime at the Walker County Road Department and the Walker County Landfill during regular business hours.

Levie
Family Dentistry
est. 1943

Tyler K. Levie, DDS

201 E. Villanow St.
LaFayette, GA 30728
706-638-2784
LevieFamilyDentistry.com

Always Accepting New Patients

I Choose A Christian Life
2016 Fall Series
Being a Christian is a conscious choice:
Can we be holy like God is holy?
Come see what the Bible says:
Wednesday December 14, 2016 at 7:00PM
Speaker: Daniel Curtis
Elders: David Ledford | Joe Gordon | Edward Ledford
706-638-0097 | 27schurchofchrist.com
27S Church of Christ
1644 US Hwy 27, LaFayette, GA

Exhibit C

But what about my school?

From my new book "Volunteer Bama Dawg: For those of us in broadcasting, it's a busy time of year: winter. You know the drill: reporters on every mountain, endless video of salt spreaders and pothole patchers, and wise old news anchors reminding you to protect your pipes. But by far the most cherished tradition is the school-closing list.

In our area, some say it all started with Luther Masingill, the recently deceased WDEF radio legend. I asked Luther how school closings were announced before he took the microphone in the early 1940s. He said, "I don't think schools ever closed back then. We just walked through the snow to get there." That answer was echoed by others, like the late principal Jack Benson. "We didn't close much," he said. "Most of the schools were in the neighborhoods. Some of us had to walk a mile or two, but if they had heat, they had school. If they didn't, you'd turn around and walk back home."

David Carroll
News and Notes

Another former principal, 90-year-old Bill Eldridge, said he would hold classes for whoever showed up. "If you couldn't make it, or the bus couldn't get to your house, we didn't count you absent back then," he said. "The schools got money from the state based on attendance, so we would lose money if they counted all the absences."

But eventually, schools started closing, and superintendents learned the quickest way to spread the news was to call Luther and other radio deejays. (There was little TV activity until the 1970s, as local morning newscasts were either brief or non-existent.) The busiest days of Luther's career included nonstop phone calls, with school officials trying to get through. At the same time, thousands of kids were calling to ask if their school was closed. Luther would compile an alphabetical list, meaning the poor kids of Walker and Whitfield counties would have to sit tight as he waded through the Bradleys, the Dades, and the Jacksons.

When I got into radio, I quickly learned the rules: be nice to all the callers, read the closings on-air frequently, and keep a radio nearby tuned into Luther because the school officials always called him first. It was also important to make sure no one was tricking us. Sometimes a bold 7th grader would call in, attempt to lower his voice, and say, "This is Mr. Elliott from Dade County. All schools is closed today." I'd say, "Uh, really, Mr. Elliott? I'm a little busy right now, could you give me your phone number so I could call you right back?" (Pause) "Click!" Busted. We had to be creative in the pre-Caller ID days.

Later, TV got into the act. The two-hour morning newscasts allowed plenty of time to show a list of closings. It also inspired a few other pranksters. One morning someone called Channel 3, asking us to add "Anthony's House of Cheese" to the list. A producer, flooded with legitimate calls, dutifully took down the information and entered it into the computerized list. For several hours, right at the top of the business closing list, was "Anthony's House of Cheese," which of course, didn't exist. But all day, some guy was laughing away, watching this go out on TV to hundreds of thousands of people. We tightened up after that. Although frankly, as a cheese lover, I think someone should start a House of Cheese.

Today, Facebook is a popular source of information. When the weather becomes an issue, people flock to TV news stations' Facebook pages for updated school closings. Since I'm the School Patrol reporter, I pitch in to post the latest information, and most people seem grateful. Others find it a great source for humor. No matter how clear the information may be, there are constant misunderstandings. We've learned that many people misread "Chattooga" County in northwest Georgia, assuming it is "Chattanooga" County in Tennessee, which does not exist. Unfortunately, not everyone is aware of that.

But then there's this. One day, perhaps my final day on the job, if it's really, really snowy, and truly every school is closed, I'd like to issue this statement:

"We are announcing with 100 percent certainty, that EVERY SINGLE SCHOOL in the universe will be closed today. This includes all schools in every city, every town, every county, public, private, boarding, religious, home, charter, technical, elementary, middle, high, colleges, junior colleges, universities, online, virtual, vocational, medical, dental, barber, beauty, business, GED, adult, preschool, pre-K, kindergarten, nursery, driving, Sunday School, Vacation Bible, and even schools of fish. Every one of them, in every state, in every commonwealth, in every nation, on every continent, on every planet will be closed today. There are no exceptions. Enjoy your day off, everyone!"

Within a few seconds, I guarantee someone would ask, "But what about my school?"

David Carroll, a Chattanooga news anchor, is the author of the new book "Volunteer Bama Dawg," a collection of his most popular stories, available at ChattanoogaRadioTV.com, or by sending $23 to David Carroll Book, PO Box 15185, Chattanooga, TN 37415. You may contact David at 3dc@epbfi.com

Divisive moral dilemmas

Never one to eschew controversy, I will address two sensitive issues that continue to vex the American religious, social and political conscience: abortion and homosexuality.

What do the scriptures say? Here in the Bible Belt we tend to selectively look to the Bible on certain moral questions but ignore its other teachings. For instance who among us avoids drinking milk with meat and eating catfish, trout, salmon or other fish without scales? Or shellfish? It's all forbidden in the O.T. And who has taken unruly children to the town elders to be killed? (Deut. 22: 18-21, Lev 20:9). We Christians pick and choose which scriptures we obey or ignore.

George Reed
An historical perspective

Before any decisions are made on abortion and homosexuality, two questions should be considered. Is sexual orientation a choice an individual consciously makes at some point, or is it a genetic/hormonal condition that emerges naturally and defies change? And when does human life actually begin, at conception or at some later time?

If human life begins at conception, terminating that life "in utero" is murder, plain and simple. In that context abortion isn't just about freedom of a woman's own body, it's about another life as well. And if sexual preference is something on which one decides at some point, the moral implications of that decision can and should be called into question. But in both cases there is substantial scientific evidence that conflicts with conventional thinking.

Who can recall when he or she was first attracted to the opposite sex? Personally, I can't remember when I didn't like girls. Homosexuals report a similar experience, an inborn intuitive attraction to the same sex, not a choice they consciously made. Many of them fought this reality tooth and nail because they realized it was a lifestyle neither their physiology nor the society in which they lived were equipped to accommodate. Some were pressured into heterosexual relationships including marriage in the hope that this would change their sexual orientation. But these attempts usually ended in disaster and left everyone concerned emotionally scarred.

To believe that at the very moment the male sperm cell contacts the one-celled female ovum a little person is created with a mind and a soul is a bit of a stretch. Considerable scientific evidence indicates that at this point whatever is there has neither the neural organization nor the cellular differentiation to be considered a functioning being of any kind yet. But at some point, perhaps much earlier than abortion proponents believe, this cellular mass becomes a viable organism. Exactly when this takes place is the scientific-legal-moral perplexity we must resolve. And until this takes place convincingly, I personally must remain prolife.

To continue to debate these two controversies on the legislative floors and from the pulpits is an exercise in futility. There are too many axes to grind, egos to salve and emotions to placate. Instead, we should convene our best scientific, legal and theological minds to research, discuss and decide on these questions objectively, dispassionately and, yes, prayerfully. Until we do this these issues will remain in the angry, name-calling stage where they are today, matters of emotion rather than of reason.

George B. Reed Jr., who lives in Rossville, can be reached by email at reed1600@bellsouth.net.

Bright beginnings for a New Year and Walker County's new commissioner

By Mike O'Neal

The 2016 elections — the results of which will be debated, dissected and detested for years to come — are behind us and next Thursday a new commander-in-chief will be sworn in. With the election of President Donald Trump the nation as we know it could very possibly undergo extreme change.

We'll all have to wait and see.

Closer to home, Shannon Whitfield ran a campaign by portraying himself as a agent of change, one so successful that he was elected — by a more than 3-1 margin — Walker County's first new commissioner in 16 years.

Since assuming his new duties on Jan. 1, 2017, Whitfield has been busy fulfilling some of the promises made before general election.

While a President is usually judged on the accomplishments and tone of administration during the first 100 days in office, that timeline was never considered locally.

Within days of taking office, more than a changing of the locks at the commissioner's office was underway.

New faces have been named to oversee all emergency and first responder services (except for those handled by Sheriff Steve Wilson), the position of county coordinator has been eliminated, a new communications director has been hired — and this has all transpired within the first 10 days of Whitfield's taking the reins of local governance.

The commissioner has announced a set schedule of public meetings. Twice each month there will be regular open meetings to both allow residents to bring issues before the commissioner in a public setting while at the same time making the county's business a matter of record.

Whitfield consistently stressed a need for transparency in government and in how the taxpayer money was being spent. Open accounts and accountability are central to a new way of doing business in Walker County, according to Whitfield who has been a businessman his entire adult life.

And with a business background, he is aware that a handshake and a personal pledge are keys to building a reputation for honesty and fairness business dealings. The same is true in government.

Even before he won the GOP primary, Whitfield said he intended to run on a platform that would make it possible, if elected, to make his job obsolete. His goal, repeated again and again, was to guide the process that will allow voters to decide if the sole commissioner form of county government should be replaced by a multi-member commission.

Such a change requires legislative action by state government, adoption of a local referendum and a careful consideration of how a multi-member board would be structured and how it would be led. The process takes at least four years — so it could be possible that Whitfield could be the last sole commissioner and among the first of a board of commissioners.

Though much of what is to come remains uncertain, that change is underway in Walker County is certain.

The sun today is shining brightly in our county.

Let's hope it is a harbinger of bright days ahead as we welcome a new year and a new leader for our county.

Mike O'Neal is assistant editor for the Walker County Messenger. His email is moneal@npco.com.

PUBLIC NOTICE
WALKER COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Thursday, January 26th, 2017 at 6:30 P.M.
Walker County Commissioners Office
101 South Duke Street LaFayette, GA. 30728

This was previously scheduled to be heard on January 26th, 2017 at 3:00 P.M. but due to election changes the new date for this second hearing will be January 26th, 2017 at 6:30 P.M. at the Walker County Commissioners Office located at 101 South Duke Street LaFayette, GA. 30728

Conditional Use Variance:

I. James McConathy requests a conditional use variance for property located at 1834 Old LaFayette Road, Rock Spring, GA. 30739. Tax map: 0-326-019A

For further information please call
Walker County Planning & Development at 706-638-4044

Roberts

Continued from page A4

matters. Pressure works. Facts and reason still count.

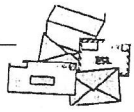
There's another option for those dismayed by Trump's election: Think local. No matter who is president, your community needs you.

Mentor a troubled youngster. Volunteer at a food bank or a hospital. Lead a scout troop. Coach a team. Visit the elderly. Read to the blind. Clean up a polluted stream. Raise a service dog. Be a foster parent. Preserve a historic building.

Everyone has something to contribute to their hometown: time, money, energy, connections, love. You'll certainly sleep better at night.

Steve and Cokie Roberts can be contacted by email at stevecokie@gmail.com.

LETTERS



Send us your thoughts on local issues, items published in our paper, and topics of community interest. We do not publish anonymous letters or mass mailings. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. For verification purposes, please include your name, address and a phone number where you can be reached during the day. We must have these to publish your letter. We will not publish your address or phone number.

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Or email your letter to:
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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
WALKER COUNTY AND THE CITIES OF CHICKAMAUGA, LAFAYETTE, LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN AND ROSSVILLE
UPDATE OF JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Walker County and the Cities of Chickamauga, Lafayette, Lookout Mountain and Rossville have prepared a draft Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for 2017-2027 according to the 2014 Minimum Planning Standards set by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Accordingly, a joint public hearing is scheduled for the County and Cities to accept comments on the Draft Joint Comprehensive Plan for Walker County and the Cities of Chickamauga, Lafayette, Lookout Mountain and Rossville, for the period of 2017-2027. This draft plan was prepared by Walker County and the Cities of Chickamauga, Lafayette, Lookout Mountain and Rossville with broad public participation and with guidance from a Steering Committee of public and private sector individuals. After the public hearing and receipt of public comment, the draft plan will be submitted for review by the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Plan approved by February 28, 2017 is required to maintain Qualified Local Government (QLG) status for each local government per the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 allowing continued eligibility for State loans, grants, or permits for another five years.

The public hearing on the draft plan will be held Friday, January 13, 2017 at 10:00 am at LaFayette City hall, 207 South Duke St., LaFayette, GA 30728.

Copies of the draft plan will be available for review at City and County offices, or on the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission website, nwgrc.org.

Exhibit C

WALKER COUNTY
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
AGENDA ITEM

Owner: **James McConathy**

Petitioner: **same**

Location of Property: **1834 Old LaFayette Road Rock Spring, GA. 30738**

Date Applied: **11-14-2016**
PC Meeting Date: **1-12-2017**

Present Zoning: R-2 (Residential)

APPLICANT'S INTENT: Mr. McConathy has had a small engine repair shop at his house since 1998 and would like to continue to operate it.

DETAILS OF REQUEST:

Mr. McConathy has operated a small engine repair shop out of his home since 1998 and is asking for a conditional use variance to be able to continue the work. This is engine repair for lawn mowers. His property is zoned R-2 which does not allow for this practice.

Exhibit C

Projected Area:

Exhibit C

Zoning Map:

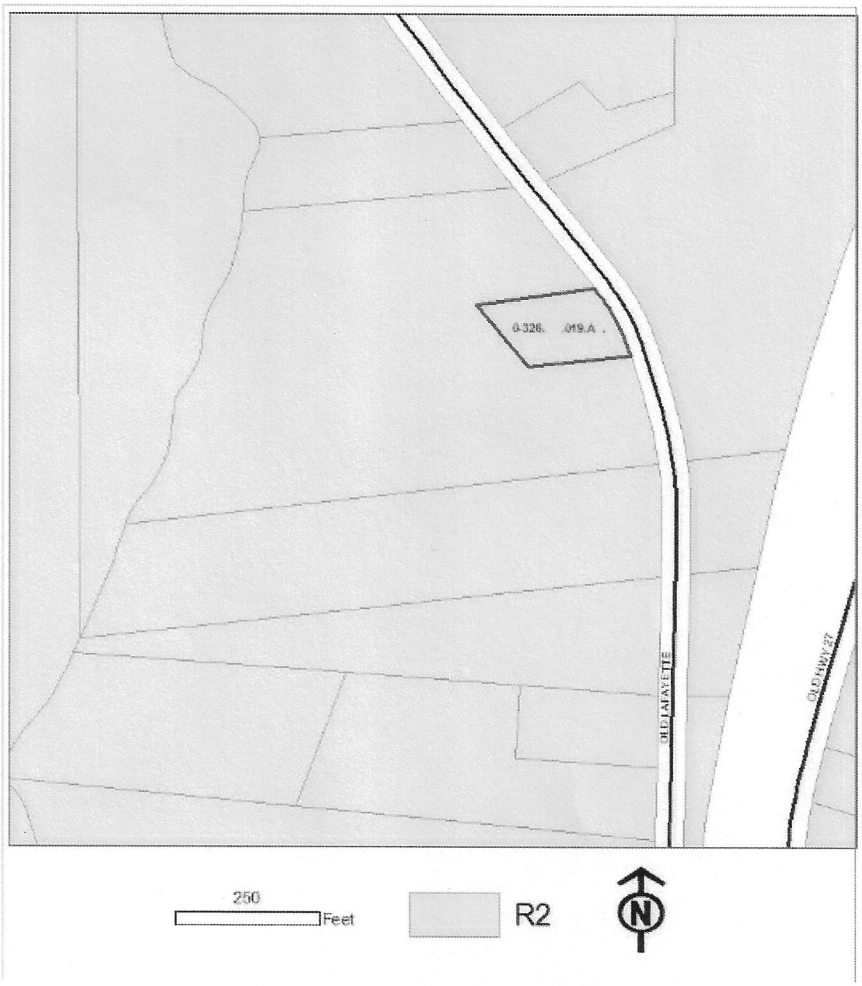

Exhibit C

Mr. McConathy's house on the property

The garage beside his house