

AGENDA

PUBLIC HEARING OF THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF WALKER COUNTY, GEORGIA

Walker County Courthouse Annex III, 201 S Main Street
LaFayette, Georgia 30728

- Date:** Thursday, October 8, 2020
- Time:** Public Hearing 6:00 PM
- Invocation:** Given by Commissioner Shannon Whitfield
- Call to Order:** Commissioner Whitfield will call the meeting to order
- Pledge:** United States Flag and Georgia Flag

Open of Public Hearing New Business:

- I. Ordinance No. O-02-20, An Ordinance Amending Title 27, Article V, Chapter 30 of the Code of Walker County, Georgia Regarding the International Property Maintenance Code; Repeal of any and All Conflicting Ordinances and Parts of Ordinances; Provide for Severability; and Provide For Other Purposes
- II. Ordinance O-03-20, An Ordinance Adding Article VI to Chapter 14 of the Code of Walker County, Georgia Regarding the Walker County Business Code; Establishing a Special Events Permit

Speakers will be asked to come to the podium and state their name for the record. Please limit your comments to five minutes and keep them on the topic of the above proposed Ordinances.

- Adjournment:** Commissioner Whitfield will adjourn the Public Hearing. There is no action to be taken on these proposed Ordinances on this date.

COUNTY OF WALKER
STATE OF GEORGIA

ORDINANCE NO. O-02-20

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE 27, ARTICLE V, CHAPTER 30 OF THE CODE OF WALKER COUNTY, GEORGIA REGARDING THE INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE; REPEAL OF ANY AND ALL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND PARTS OF ORDINANCES; PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDE FOR OTHER PURPOSES

WHEREAS, Walker County, Georgia desires to amend its ordinances regulating and governing the conditions and maintenance of all property, buildings and structures; by providing the standards for supplied utilities and facilities and other physical things and conditions essential to ensure that structures are safe, sanitary and fit for occupation and use, and the demolition of such existing structures in the unincorporated areas of Walker County, Georgia; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefor; repealing all other ordinances and parts of the ordinances in conflict therewith.

THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED by the Walker County Sole Commissioner that the Code of Walker County Georgia is amended as follows:

1.

Sec. 302.8 of the International Property Maintenance Code adopted by Walker County is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

Sec. 302.8 – Motor Vehicles.

~~Motor vehicles. Except as provided for in other regulations, no more than 2 inoperative or unlicensed motor vehicles shall be parked, kept or stored outside on any premises, and no vehicle shall at any time be in a state of major disassembly, disrepair, or in the process of being stripped or dismantled. Painting of vehicles is prohibited unless conducted inside an approved spray booth.~~

~~Exception: A vehicle of any type is permitted to undergo major overhaul, including body work, provided that such work is performed inside a structure or similarly enclosed area designed and approved for such purposes.~~

Motor vehicles. Except as provided for in other regulations, no more than two (2) inoperable or unlicensed motor vehicles shall be parked, kept or stored outside on any premises; such vehicles must be covered with a tarp or vehicle covering and parked behind a building, home or other structure obstructing the view from the road. All vehicles of any type are permitted to undergo major overhaul, including mechanical and body work, provided that such work is performed inside a structure, such as a garage, or similarly enclosed area designed and approved for such

purposes. Painting of vehicles is prohibited unless conducted inside an *approved* spray booth.

2.

Sec. 308.2 of the International Property Maintenance Code adopted by Walker County is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

Sec. 308.2 – Disposal of rubbish.

~~Every occupant of a structure shall dispose of all rubbish in a clean and sanitary manner by placing such rubbish in approved containers.~~

Every occupant of a structure shall dispose of all rubbish in a clean and sanitary manner by placing such rubbish in a plastic or galvanized trash container with a lid until removed from the structure and disposed of at a rubbish storage facility or garbage facility.

3.

Sec. 308.3 of the International Property Maintenance Code adopted by Walker County is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

Sec. 308.3 – Disposal of garbage.

~~Every occupant of a structure shall dispose of garbage in a clean and sanitary manner by placing such garbage in an approved garbage disposal facility or approved garbage containers.~~

Every occupant of a structure shall dispose of garbage in a clean and sanitary manner by placing such garbage in a plastic or galvanized trash container with a lid until removed from the premises for disposal at a garbage disposal facility.

4.

This ordinance is effective immediately upon its adoption. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

5.

If any section, clause, sentence, or phrase of this ordinance is held to be invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, then said holding shall in no way affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS 22nd DAY OF OCTOBER, 2020.

Shannon K. Whitfield
Sole Commissioner
Walker County, Georgia

ATTEST:

Rebecca Wooden
Clerk of Walker County, Georgia

**COUNTY OF WALKER
STATE OF GEORGIA**

ORDINANCE NO. O-03-20

AN ORDINANCE ADDING ARTICLE VI TO CHAPTER 14 OF THE CODE OF WALKER COUNTY, GEORGIA REGARDING THE WALKER COUNTY BUSINESS CODE; ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT

WHEREAS, special event permits are in place across the state of Georgia and the United States, and there is in existence in counties neighboring Walker County a permitting system for special events; and

WHEREAS, consistent practice with communities of similar size lessens confusion for event planners and entrepreneurs; and

WHEREAS, information about the existence of special events occurring in unincorporated Walker County is necessary to safeguard public health and safety by providing for effective emergency preparedness and response;

THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED by the Walker County Sole Commissioner that the Code of Walker County Georgia is amended as follows:

ARTICLE VI: SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT

Sec. 14-90. - Definitions:

The following definitions shall apply to the interpretation and enforcement of this article:

Director: The Governing authority of Walker County, Georgia, or a designee for the administration of this article.

Producer: Any person, group of persons, organizations, association, club, or other entity responsible for planning, producing and conducting an event. See also section on Identification of Producer.

Sheriff: The Sheriff of Walker County, Georgia.

Special Event: The term “special event” or “event” shall mean any organized activity having as its purpose entertainment or recreation, such as a festival, celebration, foot race, bicycle race, vehicle race, horse race, barrel race, rodeo, concert, parade or march, film or television production, tour, rally or assembly which takes place on a public street, sidewalk or right-of-way, or occurs on private property and impacts government services on public rights-of-

way or may impact the health, safety or welfare of the public generally because of the nature of the assembly or the size of the assembly. The term “special event” or “event” does not include an organized activity having as its purpose entertainment, recreation or education which occurs on county or school board property or in the county public use buildings.

Vendor: Any person or persons or entity engaging in the sale to the public of any food or food products, including beverages, goods, services, or merchandise of whatever nature from any location, either mobile or stationary, on a temporary itinerant basis in connection with a special event. The definition of vendor, as used in this ordinance, shall not be construed to include or prohibit a permanent business, operating under the provisions of business license ordinances and other applicable laws, from displaying goods or merchandise on a public sidewalk immediately in front of and adjacent to the permanent business structure so long as such displays do not impede the normal flow of pedestrian traffic and so long as other laws and ordinances pertaining to such business or displays are complied with.

Sec. 14-91. - Permits.

- (a) *Required.* It shall be unlawful for any person, group, organization, association, club or other entity to conduct or cause to be conducted any special event in unincorporated Walker County without having obtained a valid permit for such event.
- (b) *Geographic limitation; responsibility for police and sanitation service.* A special event shall be limited to the specific geographic area(s) within which the event is to take place and the producer of a special event shall be responsible for the provision of security and sanitation services within the boundaries of the event for a period of two hours past the conclusion of the event or until the area is cleared of all activities and structures related to such event.
- (c) *Time limitation.* Except for the clearing of the area, no special event shall be allowed to continue beyond the time approved on the permit for the event. All permits issued pursuant to this article shall be temporary and shall not vest in the holder any permanent property rights in a permit. 24 hours is permitted for clean-up. Exceptions may be considered by the director, or designee, on a case by case basis prior to the event.
- (d) *Site plan and delineation of boundaries; preservation of areas for circulation.* The outermost boundaries of the special event shall be fully and clearly delineated on a map, which shall be no smaller than 8.5 inches x 11 inches in size, and attached to the application for a permit.

Sketches must include traffic patterns, curb cuts, proposed parking plan and entrance/exit points for emergency vehicles. All public streets and/or sidewalks within and adjacent to such area(s) or public rights-of-way on which government services are impacted shall be clearly identified. The Fire Marshal requires that all entries, exits and fire lanes be maintained.

The director, or designee, shall require, as part of the approval for the event, that areas no less than five feet in width shall be designated and preserved for public circulation and access to adjoining business establishments outside the area(s) delineated for the event.

- (e) *Maps for walks, runs, rides or races.* The producer of a special event such as a walk, run ride or race, as to which the provisions of subsection (d) above would not be practicable, shall submit with the application for a permit a map, which shall be no smaller than 8.5 inches x 11 inches in size, showing the exact route of the course for the event.

Sec. 14-92. - Application; fee.

- (a) A producer of a special event shall make an application for a permit for such event at the Walker County Planning Office on a form prescribed by the director. Application forms may be obtained from the Planning Office.
- (b) An application for a special event shall be filed with the director at least 60 days prior to the date the event is scheduled to occur. However, no application shall be accepted earlier than one year prior to the date of the event.
- (c) A nonrefundable *application fee*, as set in the Planning Office fee schedule, shall be paid at the time the application for a permit is filed. Such fee shall be payable to Walker County Planning Office.

Sec. 14-93. - Identification of producer.

The producer of an event, if a group or organization, shall be fully identified on the application. However, a special event permit shall be issued only to an individual person, who may be the actual producer or a designated agent of the producer, and such individual person shall be solely and fully responsible for compliance with all provisions, including all financial requirements, of this article and other applicable laws.

Sec. 14-94. - Administrative review.

The director shall cause the application to be circulated to each government department and/or other agency whose services the director determines would be affected by the nature and activities of the proposed event. Each such department or agency shall review the application and note the services which it will be required to perform, the number of personnel to perform such services, the length of time to perform such services, the cost to perform such services, and any other information which would assist the director in facilitating the event and services required.

Sec. 14-95. - Special conditions on permit.

Each department of the government reviewing an application may recommend in writing certain conditions or restrictions as deemed necessary to facilitate the event, to comply with other laws or regulations, and/or to ensure the safety, health and welfare of the community. In reviewing the recommendations of the departments, the director may impose such conditions or restrictions as part of the permit and such special conditions so imposed shall be construed to have the full force and effect of law as a provision of this article. A violation of such conditions or restrictions shall be deemed a violation of this article.

Sec. 14-96. - Final approval of permit; minimum review period.

- (a) The director is authorized to approve and issue a permit for a special event after considering all comments and conditions of the reviewing departments and agencies as well as other information pertaining to the proposed event as described on the application, and after the payment of all applicable fees and costs.
- (b) A minimum of 30 working days shall be allowed for the administrative review of an application and the issuance of a permit.
- (c) The government shall either issue or deny the permit no later than 30 working days following the date the completed application is filed. If the permit is denied, the producer shall be notified of the denial; on a written request by the producer for the reason(s) for the denial, the reason(s) for the denial shall be given in writing.
- (d) A special events permit is not transferable. The producer identified on the application is the responsible party for any event. Should the producer of record

no longer have an affiliation with a permitted event, a new permit with a new producer must be sought.

Sec. 14-97. - Emergency issuance of permit.

In extraordinary circumstances, the director shall be authorized to waive or otherwise expedite any or all of the review process and to issue a special event permit upon payment by the producer of all applicable fees and costs for such event.

Sec. 14-98. - Permit fees.

- (a) The fee for a permit to conduct a special event shall be based on all services to be provided by the government for such an event and shall be equal to the estimated actual cost to the government to provide such services. The initial permit fee shall be aggregate of the estimated costs of such services calculated by each government department. The director may require a security bond be provided by a producer or a cash deposit, if he determines that a security bond or deposit is necessary to provide for unanticipated expenses in connection with the event. If, at the conclusion of the event, the cost of government services is greater than the initial payment, the producer of the event shall be billed for the difference. Failure to pay the outstanding amount within 30 days of the billing date shall be a violation of this article.
- (b) The initial permit fee must be paid in full at least five (5) business days prior to the date of the event.
- (c) The fees required in this section shall be in addition to the *application* fee and any other fees which may be required by any other ordinances or regulations that might be applicable.
- (d) No producer of any special event, except as otherwise provided for, shall be exempt from the payment of the appropriate fees and charges required under this article. The Board of Commissioners may exempt all or a portion of the fee upon petition of the producer.

Sec. 14-99. - Liability.

The producer of any special event shall indemnify and hold harmless the government of Walker County, Georgia, its officers, departments, constitutional officers,

employees and agents from liability of damages arising from any acts or omissions emanating from a special event. An indemnification and hold harmless agreement shall be filed with, and made a part of, the application form. The producer shall be responsible for providing all liability insurance that may be necessary for a special event. The county shall be designated as an additional insured. The minimum insurance requirement is set forth in the Special Event Permit application.

Sec. 14-100. - Vendors.

- (a) *Sales permitted.* The sale of food or any merchandise or services of any type by a vendor shall be allowed as a component of a special event provided such vendor is approved and authorized in writing by the producer of the event and shall be conducted in accordance with such conditions and limitations as shall be imposed in writing by the producer and submitted as part for the application for a permit and in accordance with such conditions and limitations as shall be imposed by county, state and federal laws, rules, and regulations.
- (b) *Authorization of vendors.* The producer of a special event shall have sole responsibility and authority to allow or disallow sidewalk or street vending as a component of an event and to designate the location and activities of such vendors. It shall be unlawful for any vendor to engage in such business at any location or in any manner not authorized by the producer of the event. A list of authorized vendors should be provided to the Walker County Planning Office at least three (3) days prior to the event.
- (c) *Identification required.* Any vendor authorized by the event producer shall be required to prominently display on his or her person a badge identifying the vendor as an authorized participant in the event. Such identification shall be not less than three inches by three inches, shall state that the bearer is an official participant in the event, and shall bear the signature of the producer of the event. The producer is responsible for providing all badges to vendors.
- (d) *Permit not required.* Vendors authorized by the producer of an event as a component of the event shall not be required to obtain any separate business license or vendor permit to operate during the period of the event, with the exception of vendors selling or serving beer, wine or distilled spirits. All other vendors, of whatever nature, not authorized as a participant in the special event shall obtain the appropriate licenses and permits as required under other applicable ordinances.

- (e) *Unauthorized vending prohibited.* It shall be unlawful for any vendor not authorized by the producer of a special event as provided under this section to engage in such business within a distance of 25 yards of such event from one hour before until one hour after the event.
- (f) *Exemption.* Whether or not approved by an event producer, a vendor that has been assigned a fixed location for the purpose of conducting business within Walker County may continue to engage in such business at that assigned location during any special event in accordance with other applicable laws.
- (g) *Food sales.* The vendor of any food, whether hot or cold, as a part of a special event shall be subject to all rules and regulations of the Walker County Health Department. It shall be the responsibility of the producer of an event to assure compliance with this section by any such vendors.

Sec. 14-101. - Glass containers prohibited.

The use of glass containers for consumption of food or beverage by attendees within the delineated boundaries of a special event shall be prohibited.

Sec. 14-102. - Law Enforcement Services.

Traffic and crowd control shall be provided by the Walker County Sheriff's Office at the producers expense. The number of officers and/or special arrangements shall be determined by the sheriff. The sheriff and his lawful deputies, and other law enforcement agencies including deputies not assigned to the special event, shall be allowed access to the special event property at all times.

Sec. 14-103. - Emergency Medical Services.

At the discretion of law enforcement and emergency services, an ambulance(s) may be required on site. If required, the producer is responsible for contracting with an ambulance service to provide this public safety provision.

Sec. 14-104. - Toilet facilities.

The director of the Walker County Planning Office, upon consideration of the health safety, and welfare of the attendees of the special event and the community, may

require the producer of a special event to provide temporary outdoor toilet facilities at any event. The number of toilets and their locations shall be determined by the director of the Walker County Planning Office.

Sec. 14-105. - Entertainment.

Musical entertainment shall be provided in a manner consistent with the peace and good order of the community. Musical entertainment shall not commence before 10 a.m. and must cease before 11:30 p.m., unless granted a special exception by the director, or designee.

Sec. 14-106. - Fireworks.

Any producer of an event desiring to conduct a public exhibition or display of fireworks shall first obtain a permit from the judge of Probate Court in accordance with the provisions set forth under state law and county ordinances.

Sec. 14-107. - Tents, stages, etc.

Tents, arbors, stages, grandstands or other temporary facilities constructed or erected as a part of a special event shall be approved by the director of the Walker County Planning Office and the Fire Marshal's Office.

Sec. 14-108. - Street closing.

The complete or partial closure of any street, sidewalk or public way of a special event shall be approved by the director in consultation with the sheriff and emergency services. As part of the application, the producer must submit a list of all closures being requested for their event.

Sec. 14-109. - Banners, signs, etc.

Temporary, non commercial banners or signs may be permitted overhead across public streets for the purpose of designating starting and finish lines for a race. Small banners, pennants, signs or other decorations which do not interfere with vehicular or pedestrian traffic, and which do not damage or deface any tree or public structure, may be

allowed as part of a special event. Approval of the Walker County Planning Office shall be obtained by the event producer for any banners or signs permitted in this section. The producer of the event shall be responsible for the removal of such banners, pennants or decorations within 24 hours after the close of the event.

Sec. 14-110. - Duration of permit.

No permit issued under this article shall be valid prior to or past the date of the special event for which it is issued.

Sec. 14-111. - Cessation of activities.

The safety, health, welfare and good order of all citizens and the community shall be first and foremost and every special event shall be conducted in such a manner, The sheriff or his lawful deputies may terminate any activity, whether a part of or the entire event, which does not meet this community standard. Upon notification of the event producer in person by the sheriff or his lawful deputies to cease any activity, it shall be unlawful for such producer and/or participant to permit such activity to continue.

Sec. 14-112. - Picketing and demonstrations, etc.

Any person, group or organization engaged in any picketing, demonstrations, assembly, gathering procession or other activity protected by the U.S. Constitution shall be prohibited from blocking the ingress of any public or private place. Any person, group or organization engaged in such activities are required to make an application as set forth in this ordinance. However, any such person, group, or organization shall be exempt from the permit requirements in section 14-91 and the fees set forth in section 14-92.

Sec. 14-113. - Funeral processions.

The provisions of this article shall not apply to any parade or procession conducted under the supervision and direction of a funeral director in conjunction with any funeral.

Sec. 14-114. - Sidewalk cafes; displays.

The provisions of this article shall not apply to any sidewalk cafes or displays as regulated by other laws or ordinances.

Sec. 14-115. - Punishment.

Any violation of the provisions of this article shall be punished as provided in the Official Code of Walker County, Georgia. In addition to the aforementioned fines, the court may impose court costs for each offense.

Sec. 14-116. - Special exclusions.

If held on their property, this article shall not apply to meetings or events of church or religious groups, civic clubs or organizations, or non-profit corporations which hold 501(c)(3) status.

- (a) Individual or community yard sales are exempt from the permit if they do not exceed four (4) days.
- (b) Children's lemonade stands, etc. are exempt from the permit.
- (c) Private parties hosted by an individual are exempt from the permit provided that no monies are exchanged.
- (d) County sponsored events are exempt from the permit.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS 22nd DAY OF OCTOBER, 2020.

Shannon K. Whitfield
Sole Commissioner
Walker County, Georgia

ATTEST:

Rebecca Wooden
Clerk of Walker County, Georgia

LOCAL COLUMNIST ■ ELIZABETH CRUMBLY

Lost in grief

Second of three articles
After Reece's death, I was lost in grief. I would pull over on the way to work because I was crying too hard to drive. Her departure was so hard to accept that there were times it felt like she was actually still here. A bay horse in a roadside paddock or even the sunlight on my back as I worked with one of my trainer's horses would lull me into thinking I'd see her just around the next bend. But then, I'd jolt back into my unwelcome reality.



Crumbly

I became obsessed with identifying my role in her death. The night before I found her colicing was a hot one. Sometimes horses roll when they're hot. Sometimes rolling can cause nephrosplenic entrapment. Should I have hosed her down one more time before bedtime?

In reality, this wasn't Reece's first bout with health issues. She had coliced the previous year not long after I'd bought her, and her former owner had mentioned that she'd had some problems with her ovaries that were never clearly defined. When it came down to it, there may not have been much I could have changed to prevent Reece's death, but the doubt lingered.

The summer drew to a close, and I began to feel fall in the air. I had the sudden realization one day that the rest of the world was moving forward, but I was still stuck in that moment when I made the decision to put Reece down.

"The seasons will change," I remember saying to myself. "Everyone will move on."

Family and horse friends expressed their condolences, but they stopped talking about Reece after a while. In my mind, though, losing her was the only thing that mattered, and I couldn't figure out how I would be able to continue owning horses or to get back to life's normal routines.

And then it hit me one morning as I was driving. Reece's mother, Cheyenne, was still alive and of reproductive age. It became my sole mission to track her down — I felt if I could find her, I had a chance of moving on.

I didn't know if I would be able to purchase her, but I had to try. I got in touch with the woman I had purchased Reece from, and she told me Chey belonged to a man who was using her in his breeding

program. The man graciously allowed my mother and me to visit his Florida farm, and I almost could not breathe as he called his broodmares up. I had never laid eyes on Chey, and I didn't know what to expect.

The mares came chuffing up to us from between huge oaks where they had been grazing. Chey's owner pointed her out to us, and she showed her way through the small herd, bossy and eager to socialize. She was bay like Reece, but a lighter shade, and she had a lot more chrome. Her wide blaze wrapped around her face in a mask, and white frothed up her legs like spilled milk. She whuffed into my hand with her pink muzzle and regarded us with shining brown eyes. She had none of Reece's delicate fairy horse build. Her sturdy, 14-year-old body had already born several babies, and she was pregnant now with another.

Haltingly, I told her owner that I would like to buy her after she had this baby. It had been two months since Reece's death, and I was still raw. I did not know what his answer would be. He had known Reece and had seen her potential. I held my breath waiting for his response. Incredibly, it was a "yes."

We decided we would breed Chey on her foal heat — a standard practice for breeders as mares cycle a couple of weeks after giving birth. I spent the next few months caught up in the choice between two stallions. It would be either Reece's sire, a fine stallion who was double registered, or another sire who was known to produce incredible paint horse hunters. In the end, I chose the second sire. Chey checked pregnant in Florida, and after her foal was weaned, I shipped her up to my home in North Georgia. She was only just bred, so I was able to ride her at first.

Reece's trot had been her most distinctive gait. She would be suspended for a split second as the diagonal pairs of feet switched, and it gave her a breathtaking, almost surreal appearance. More than once, people had stopped to stare in busy show warmup rings. The suspension brought a distinctive lurch for her rider, and I had ridden many horses since her death searching obsessively and futilely for that feeling. I guess I was looking for

a sign that she was still here in some way. When I asked Chey for the trot, she sprang forward, and finally, finally, I felt that distinctive hesitation in the middle of the stride. I closed my eyes, and I was back on Reece.

Chase was born on a windy April morning almost two years after Reece's death. He was white with two blue eyes and a chestnut war bonnet, which he shed once his foal hair was gone. Because of his underlying pink skin, his coat had a glistening sheen in the sun. He was stunning to look at, and his movement was what I had hoped for — huge trot, flat knee. Again, I had high hopes.

While I waited for Chase to mature and be started under saddle, I started showing Chey in dressage. Despite being in her teens, her previous show career and babies, she was willing to embark on this new journey. Tears spilled down my cheeks, and I threw my arms around her neck as we exited the arena after presenting a beautiful training level test at a recognized dressage show. It was apparent in Chey's focus and responsiveness every time we showed that she was there not just to do a job but to perform to the fullest of her capabilities. I knew Reece would have been the same way.

Meanwhile, Chase was finally old enough to start under saddle, but the more I worked with him, the more apparent it became that he was not Reece.

He did not seem to want the job I was asking him to do. He began balking under saddle, and the balking turned to aggressive bucking. I worked with him and got help from some area cowboys. He got pretty consistent under saddle with a firm hand, but I never really knew when he might go off script and do something unpredictable. In the back of my mind, I knew I had failed to replace Reece, but I was not ready to admit that fact even to myself.

Elizabeth Crumbly is a newspaper veteran and freelance writer. She lives in rural Northwest Georgia where she teaches riding lessons, writes and raises her family. She is a former editor of The Catoosa County News. You can correspond with her at ewc@collectiveink.com.



Georgia Power customers to see \$17 reduction on October bills

By Dave Williams
Capital Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Georgia Power residential customers will receive an estimated \$12 credit on their bills next month under a resolution the state Public Service Commission (PSC) approved unanimously Tuesday, Sept. 1.

The credit, based on the typical customer's monthly use of 1,000-kilowatt hours, reflects a one-time refund of \$61.6 million in earnings the Atlanta-based utility realized last year above its allowable return on equity (ROE) range. A rate increase the PSC approved last December set the ROE range at between 9% and 12%.

Paired with lower fuel rates Georgia Power implemented the beginning of the summer, the typical residential customer will see a reduction of more than \$17 in October. Georgia Power customers

have received several credits this year. In June, the commission approved an \$11.29 credit resulting from \$51.5 million in earnings above the allowable ROE band during 2018.

The utility rolled back its fuel rates in May, saving customers \$10.26 per month, part of which came from an interim reduction the utility provided to help customers weather the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

And back in February, Georgia Power passed on savings the company realized from the tax cut legislation Congress passed in late 2017, which came to about \$22 a month for the typical residential customer.

The February savings came from the last installment of three reductions made possible by the federal tax cuts, which totaled \$106 million.

Georgia's college fintech curriculum expanding into high schools

By Dave Williams
Capital Beat News Service

ATLANTA — A new partnership between the state agencies in charge of higher education and K-12 will expand the University System of Georgia's fintech curriculum into high schools.

The new program will build on the success of the Georgia FinTech Academy, which has provided at least one fintech course to more than 1,900 college students at 23 of the

university system's 26 institutions since it was launched two years ago.

These college courses will now be available to students attending Georgia's 481 public high schools, allowing them to earn college credit and credentials valued by employers in a fast-growing industry.

"Fintech is a high-demand career field, and we are committed to preparing the state's workforce to meet that demand," said Tristan Denley, the university system's executive vice chancellor for academic affairs.

Georgia is a global financial technology and payments hub, so much so it is home to America's payments processing "Transaction Alley." In fact, 70% of all U.S. financial transactions pass through Georgia companies each year.

The new partnership between the university system, the Georgia Department of Education and the American Transaction Processors Coalition is aimed at maintain-

ing that momentum.

"Offering an on-ramp at the high school level makes this a first-of-its-kind initiative that can potentially inspire similar programs across the country to feed our growing industry's workforce demand," said West Richards, the coalition's executive director. The high-school fintech program will include three courses modeled after those offered by the Georgia FinTech Academy at the college level.

The courses may be provided as a standard high school pathway or for dual high school and college credit. Students

interested in the dual-enrollment program should contact their academic advisor or guidance counselor.

LOCAL COLUMNIST ■ DAVID CARROLL

A teacher's new job description

In my job as an education reporter, I frequently hear from parents and teachers complaining about overcrowded classrooms. These days, that usually means 25 or more students at a time. I don't argue the point. The smaller the class size, the better, in every way.

I think back to my 6th grade class at Bryant (Alabama) School. Due to a construction project, we were relocated to a small building on campus. There were 44 kids in my class. About half were girls, and of course they were angels. Of the 22 boys, at least half were rowdy, to put it kindly. So how's this for a recipe: put 44 kids in a crowded room, with maybe 30 attempting to learn, while the others were setting the trash can on fire.

At the same time, my 6th grade teacher, the only male on the faculty, was suddenly promoted to principal. He replaced a young man who was new to the community. The new guy had been threatened by an angry parent, so he left one day and never returned. (He may still be hiding out, and I wouldn't blame him.)

So my 43 classmates and I were in the hands of a substitute until a qualified replacement could be found. That would take a while, and in the meantime, the inmates ran the asylum. The sub teacher was overwhelmed. She had not signed up for combat duty.

I share that story to say that in my school career, it never got any worse than that. Learning conditions were not ideal, but most of us made it to 7th grade with no permanent scars.

Fast forward to the notorious year of 2020. Many teachers and students have horror stories that put mine to shame. These teachers had envisioned a career of dreams. They would find a grade level

or subject they love, prepare lesson plans, nurture bright-eyed, eager children, and then do it again tomorrow.

Our new reality doesn't quite work like that. The job description for "teacher" should now include sanitation expert, mask enforcer, distance compliance officer, disinfection specialist, nurse, computer technician, and remote learning guru. So yes, my 6th grade sub had her hands full, but at least she wasn't coping with a pandemic.

Recently, I asked my Facebook teacher friends a couple of quick questions: "How's it going in this crazy new world? What's working, and what's not?"

I told them they could reply publicly, for everyone to see. Or they could send me a confidential message, so that only I could see it.

The public responses were mostly positive, and I am sure they were truthful. Every school is different, and in some cases the school leadership and parents are working together to ensure a clean environment, considering the masks, the distancing, and other COVID-19 distractions.

But the ones who communicated with me privately painted a different picture. As with most of us, their summer vacation was not very restful. Teachers were reluctant to travel, so they spent their summer planning how to approach their new challenges. Would they continue to conduct class remotely, while coping with spotty internet connections? Or would they venture into the potentially dangerous world of crowded school hallways?

When some of the teachers returned to school, they were promised ample supplies of wipes, tissues, paper towels, disinfectants, and cleaners. They were assured that extra cleaning crews would

be on hand around the clock, making sure surfaces would be scrubbed, trash cans would be emptied, and risks would be minimized.

Sadly, that has not always been the case. In my home county, after a few weeks of phased-in attendance, the doors were finally opened to all, five days a week. Almost immediately, several buildings were closed again for sanitization and contact tracing. When a positive case was reported, it was back to the home computer. Entire cheerleading squads and sports teams were under 14-day quarantine, with lucrative, rivalry football games canceled for the first time ever.

Our innocent optimism of six months ago is gradually giving way to the grim possibility that we could be living under these conditions for several more months, and maybe even a year or more.

Successful schools have always been about building relationships. This year, that is happening like never before. Out of necessity, teachers are reinventing the wheel, one day at a time. School buildings have come alive, with a vibrant heartbeat. Kids are adapting, because that's what they do.

Let's salute our teachers, aides, staff members, cafeteria workers, cleaning crews, bus drivers, and administrators. You are making the best of a bad situation, and yes, we see you.

Ordinarily, I would say, "Hug a teacher." We can't do that, but we can offer our appreciation, our prayers, and our support.

David Carroll, a Chattahoochee news anchor, is the author of "Volunteer Bona Daug," available on his website, ChattahoocheeRadioTV.com. You may contact him at radio2020@yahoo.com, or 900 Whitehall Road, Chattahoochee, TN 37405.

AMBERWOOD APARTMENTS

**** NOW LEASING ****

706-638-7567

1 and 2 Bedroom Apartments
Water, Sewage, and Landscaping Provided

Playground, Washer/Dryer Connections, Abundant closet space,
Appliances, Basketball Court, On-site Management and Maintenance Staff

This Institution Is An Equal Opportunity
Provider and Employer

TDD# 1-800-255-0135 (V) 1-800-255-0036 (HA)

www.amberwoodapartmentsoflafayette.com

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Governing Authority of Walker County, Georgia proposes to amend the county code of ordinances. O-02-20 amends language in the existing International Property Maintenance Code (Chapter 30) addressing inoperable vehicles and the storage of trash. O-03-20 adds a Special Events Permit to the existing Walker County Business Code (Chapter 14).

Public hearings on the proposed ordinances will be held on Thursday, October 8, 2020 and Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 6 p.m. at the Walker County Courthouse Annex III, 201 S Main Street in LaFayette, GA. Copies of the proposed ordinances are available for review at the Commissioner's Office (101 S Duke St, LaFayette) and online at walkercountyga.gov.

**Walker County Brownfield Program
Request for Qualifications**

The Walker County Development Authority (WCDA) has issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to provide environmental and engineering consulting services on a task order basis for a Brownfield program in Walker County, Georgia.

Specifications for this RFQ are available to download on the WCDA website (walkergada.us) and County's website (walkercountyga.gov) or at the Walker County Commissioner's Office (101 S. Duke Street, LaFayette, GA) during regular business hours.

Proposals will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at the Commissioner's Office or via email at ewells@lafga.org. Oral presentations to WCDA, the County and cities of Chickamauga, LaFayette and Rossville may be requested.

WCDA reserves the right to reject any and all responses.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Governing Authority of Walker County, Georgia proposes to amend the county code of ordinances. O-02-20 amends language in the existing International Property Maintenance Code (Chapter 30) addressing inoperable vehicles and the storage of trash. O-03-20 adds a Special Events Permit to the existing Walker County Business Code (Chapter 14).

Public hearings on the proposed ordinances will be held on Thursday, October 8, 2020 and Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 6 p.m. at the Walker County Courthouse Annex III, 201 S Main Street in LaFayette, GA. Copies of the proposed ordinances are available for review at the Commissioner's Office (101 S Duke St, LaFayette) and online at walkercountyga.gov.