



Summer 2022 Newsletter

## ***"Seeking Leadership and Accountability in Government"***

### **A Conversation with Clayton's Mayor:**



I first met Kurt Cannon at a political meeting in Clayton, Georgia when he stood up and announced that he was going to run for Mayor. I don't remember his exact words from that day but I'll never forget that he said he was going to have the SDS Agreement completed within his first month, if elected. I couldn't forget that statement because I remember a County Commissioner making a similar claim a little over THREE years ago. It just seems like it had become the right thing to say when you want to run for office. Much to my surprise and delight, he kept his word. This one item greatly affects Rabun County property owners so I asked Mayor Cannon if he would allow me to interview him for an article in the Rabun County Alliance

Newsletter. This is what I learned from our discussion:

**So you actually did it. You were able to agree on an SDS. How did that happen?**



Mayor Cannon said that in his first month he had the details completed and in his second month he was able to hold a joint meeting with the Rabun County Commissioners so the public would have the opportunity to witness them all raise their hands at the same time and vote to pass the new SDS Agreement. He felt it was important for the citizens to see their elected officials working together. Without an SDS verified by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to comply with applicable requirements, a local government or respective authorities are ineligible to receive any state permits or financial assistance. In addition, any local projects that are not consistent with the strategy will not receive any state permits or financial assistance. So the fact that this was completed allows a huge impact for Rabun County's property owners. He felt that the items Rabun County and the City of

Clayton disagreed about were small compared to the benefits that the overall agreement would bring. Kurt understood that the county and city officials were working for the same people and they could do much more working together, which prompted him to schedule monthly meetings where they continue this process. Most times, even more frequent meetings, as he meets with Greg, at least by phone several times a month.



**What was the situation and what prompted all of the SDS issues in the first place?**

Kurt said that he found that for years, the city was not spending the money on maintaining the city water, which needed to be, to the tune of \$40-50 million to repair. Some of the issues that had not been addressed were items like old terracotta pipe lines and outdated fittings made from lead. The items he described were obvious problems, even to someone like me, with no knowledge of water infrastructure. He explained to me steps that he has already begun to correct these problems. There was a \$5 Million grant applied for, that will help correct the lead pipe issues. We NOW have a chance to get this because of the SDS is complete. Prior to his election, there was an argument as to whom, should be responsible for maintenance and repair of the systems. To Kurt, it makes more sense to allow the county to help with maintenance and repairs because they have

a much larger base and more tax dollars coming in, than just the city of Clayton. He is bringing a new “work together” attitude from the City of Clayton, to the Sewer and Water authority. When first starting the relationship with the Authority, he said that one person told him that they had never been asked by the city to work together before. Now they go to the Sewer and Water Authority meetings and continue to build a working relationship. He again mentioned his goal of weekly conversations to keep the relationship strong and keep making progress and working as a team. The City is going after grants they can obtain, while the authority is also working for complimentary grants. Kurt mentioned the idea of moving some decision making responsibilities from the city to the Water Authority. He sees the Water Authority as a separate entity and not run by elected officials. He would like to see maintenance and care of this important issue autonomous, regardless of who is elected into office.

**You’ve only been in office a few months.**

**How was the transition and how is it going?**

The mayor said that in general, things were a mess. It was a huge undertaking just to find out where the City was in terms of finances and bookkeeping before determining how to move forward. There was no simple way to see if the city was making money or losing money. There was no central accounting software being used and many financial transactions were not even using being logged into computers. Patrick Vines was hired as the Finance Director. He works well with the team and has made a huge contribution. A key part of his team is the new City Manager, Trudy Crunkleton, a native of Rabun County. She

has experience working for other Cities and will be a great resource and asset. Kurt is delighted with how well she communicates with the staff and community.

**It is hard not to notice the Clearing and Development across from City Hall. What is going on with that?**



It is a planned 91-unit housing development for the City of Clayton. It is a Private Venture and the plan is for rental houses located on the land around Bynum Street and Holden Street across from Clayton City Hall. Mayor Cannon said that he was pleased that it became a PUD community because this actually allows the City of Clayton to have a more active role in zoning requirements. There have been a lot of opinions, both positive and negative, expressed about the development. Perhaps the most vocal group is opposed with issues about "Clear Cutting" of trees. Kurt has a degree in forestry and wildlife, so he has an idea of what's going on. He has also spent many years in the construction business which provides him additional experience on this subject. He explained that they will be putting many more trees back in to replace what has been removed. It will actually replace some undesirable species of trees with more permanent and desirable types. The trees are going to be planted back with higher quality and in a more environmentally friendly manner. For instance, Virginia pines can be replaced with oaks and maples that are much more

resilient. The Kudzu, which was killing ALL of the trees, will be removed. The development will provide many much needed rental homes to our community.

**So to end this conversation on a positive tone, what are some of the Good Things that you plan for The City of Clayton?**

Mayor Cannon began answering this by acknowledging "we are way behind". He mentions that our City Offices are in an old school building. He drove to work his first day and couldn't help notice the junk and debris cluttering the area. He immediately took on the task of cleaning this up. We can immediately begin removing the "eye sore". Then he began explaining The Dream. He'd like to replace this old building with a State of the Art Complex. This would have a performing arts center that could be used for courts and meetings during the day, and allow the community to use in the evenings for plays, movies, shows, etc. He plans to encourage the local theatre groups to get involved. There will be Pickle-Ball Courts. We have a large number of retirees in our area, so let's cater to them. He spoke of Incorporating Foxfire into the community garden area. Foxfire can get many grants on their own, so this will help with financing. There are so many grants available for arts and recreation and such, that will help pay for this. He also envisions a beautiful venue for weddings and events. It was interesting to me to hear an elected official explain his dreams and explain how each item will be paid for as he goes along. Not only interesting, but a First!

He said that we will begin with the water and sewer line issues. Then we redo the roads and sidewalks. The Old Clayton Inn is going to be renovated into a beautiful hotel. There are a lot of people with a lot of knowledge and a lot of money that live in

our County. He wants as many volunteers and as many ideas as he can get. He wants local folks to know that he is going to do everything he can to bring all the different groups, departments and people together to make our Clayton better. He has already begun sharing his dream with the local builders, contractors, businessmen and to ask them for their ideas

and for their support. He ended the conversation in the same way that I heard him speak on that first day that I saw him stand up and say he wanted to be Mayor so he could get the SDS done. He basically said, "now we are going to get the rest of these goals completed".

Written by Ken Fortney

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### **RABUN RECYCLING**

This is for the last year 2021-2022.

Land fill Daily average garbage per day 50.93 tons daily total for the year 12,720.45.

Construction and demolition daily average 29.04 tons total for the year 7,217.24.

Please continue to recycle.

### **ROADS:**

Pittman Construction is currently working on our summer paving package which includes Davis Gap, Hollifield connector, MJ Shirley and Seetick road. I also have another paving package out that includes a section of Stonewall estates road and Big Basin Cove Road that is being done by another Contractor this summer. The Road Department has been out patching as much as possible with lots to do on our current infrastructure along with our everyday maintenance that includes mowing, grading, ditching, culvert replacement, and cleaning up storm damage. I am just now starting to work on next year's paving packages so I don't have anything concrete to give you right now as far as details.

Scott Provance



### **SHERIFF'S REPORT**

As the summer continues, I would like to briefly talk about safety on our water ways. As you all know our county lakes are often filled with skiers, tubers, and fishermen all

enjoying the natural resources that the Lord has blessed us with. This year the Sheriff's Office has been able to more consistently patrol the waterways to supplement the DNR's Game Wardens. Some of the hazards

deputies have encountered this summer are boats traveling too close to each other, children not wearing life jackets, and violations of the no wake zones just to name a few. I would like to remind everyone that if you were born on or after January 1, 1998 you are required by law to pass a boater safety course and carry that card while operating a boat. I would encourage anyone that is new to boating to take this course to familiarize themselves with the laws and how to safely navigate the waterways. I would also like to remind everyone that is enjoying our creeks, streams, and rivers to be mindful of these summer storms that may cause the water levels to rise quickly increasing the chances of an accident to occur. We have already had at least one incident this summer on the Chattooga River. This is just a brief reminder of being safe while enjoying our creeks, streams, rivers, and lakes. I encourage everyone to get out doors and enjoy our natural resources whether it is on the river, one of our lakes, or hiking your favorite trails, or to your favorite waterfall. Since I mentioned waterfalls, I would be remiss if I didn't mention our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Celebrity Golf Tournament that benefits the children of the Georgia Sheriffs' Youth Homes held at the Waterfall Club on Lake Burton. I am amazed every year at the

turnout and support shown by the golfers, sponsors, and celebrities each year. We have had Ryan Klesko, Brad Clontz, Kevin Millwood, Scott Woerner, Reggie Brown, Evan Oglesby, Rocky Shipes, and probably everyone's favorite, Trent "Big Dawg III" Woods. The tournament will start at 9 am on Tuesday, August 30<sup>th</sup> and we would love to see you there supporting your Sheriff's Office and the Georgia Sheriffs' Youth Homes. For more information, please contact Sheriff Chad Nichols by email at [chad.nichols@rabuncounty.ga.gov](mailto:chad.nichols@rabuncounty.ga.gov) or by calling 706-782-3612.

We have also moved in to our new office located at 56 Boen Creek Road Tiger, Ga. 30576. This was a SPLOST project along with our jail expansion that should be completed later this summer or early fall. I would like to thank the hard-working men and women of the Sheriff's Office that serve selflessly to protect our citizens. They are what make the Sheriff's Office great and I am honored to be their Sheriff as well as yours! You can stay up to date with our activities and events by visiting [rabunsheriff.org](http://rabunsheriff.org) or downloading our free smartphone app from your app store. Stay safe and have a great summer!

With Gratitude,

*Sheriff Chad K. Nichols*





### **RABUN COUNTY AGRICULTURE SCIENCE CENTER (making progress)**

#### **Updates from Rabun County Schools**

We've had a slight delay with the construction of the Agri-Science center.

The current timeline is to have a ribbon cutting late fall. We are excited that students will be able to use part of the new facility at the beginning of the school year.

Thank you to all of our community for supporting the school system and eSPLOST.

Other eSPLOST projects that are being completed this summer include the second half of the HVAC renovation at the elementary school, the construction of a band pavilion, and the installation of a new scoreboard on the field.

Safety is of the utmost importance and we will be implementing enhanced procedures

and adding new technology to help us maintain secure campuses. This includes bus routes too. We ask that everyone that needs to enter our campus during the school day to be patient. These procedures are to protect or students and staff.

If you are interested in mentoring a student, please let us know. For more information, please contact Dr. Amy Pruitt or Mrs. Jessica Ward.

We are excited to welcome our students back for the 2022-23 school year. Go Cats!

Thanks!

Dr April Childers



## **RABUN COUNTY FIRE SERVICES**

**14 EMERGENCY DRIVE, SUITE 101 CLAYTON, GA 30525**

**(706) 782-2751 [RABUNCOUNTYFIRE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RABUNCOUNTYFIRE@GMAIL.COM)**

**PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Massive fire destroys home on Lake Rabun**

Rabun County Fire Services were dispatched at 10:30pm on 06/13/2022 to a report of a structure fire on Mathis Dam Road on Lake Rabun. The caller to 911 was across the lake and reported hearing an explosion and could see the house and trees on fire. RCSI arrived initially

and advised that no one was at the structure. Stations 4,7, and 12 were initially dispatched. E4, E1, T1 and Fireboat 4 arrived within minutes of each other to an approximately 12,000 square foot 3 story structure at 989 Mathis Dam Road with fire showing from the basement and side of the house and heavy, turbulent smoke on the opposite sides. An interior attack was attempted into the basement but crews were driven back by zero visibility and intense heat. All crews were evacuated from the structure and the attack mode was changed to defensive. Within minutes of the evacuation the house erupted in flames with heavy fire showing from all sides. Habersham Fire was requested for manpower. Fireboat 4 provided water supply and attacked the fire from the lake side while E4 fought the fire from above including the several small woods fire started by embers, including a power pole on fire. EMS treated 5 firefighters for heat exhaustion and dehydration but none were transported. Fire personnel remained on scene until 4:13am. The home was a total loss with small contained fires burning in the basement throughout the day. The cause of the fire is unknown at this time. The home was a vacation home and is not occupied full-time. The fire could be seen for miles around as reported by numerous callers to 911.

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## Rabun County Alliance Update



**Happy Birthday Charlie!**

It has been one year since Charlie and I began working together to see that this newsletter continues well into the future. Our initial effort was to just keep this unusual source of information going and not let this fade away. We went from having a Writer, a Printer, an Editor, a Website Designer, a Graphic Artist and a promoter; to a two-man team consisting of me and Charlie. Our next step was an attempt to increase the quality by adding more articles of interest to our property owners in Rabun County. As we continue to work on improving, we want to begin our next step, which is growing our membership and having more concerned citizens be informed and involved. We no longer print and mail our newsletter, so our cost has gone down. For that reason, we no longer charge for subscriptions. The newsletter that is now

in a pdf format can easily be shared with friends and neighbors. We would like to ask you, our readers, to help us get the word out about the RCA Newsletter and help us grow our membership. And to use a quote from our article with Kurt Cannon, “we have a lot of talented people in our county”, and the Rabun County Alliance will gladly welcome any of you that are interested in helping us create and continuously improve our work. We have always felt that “knowledge is power” and that “there is strength in numbers”. Please share our newsletter with anyone that might be concerned about local information that affects our property values. The easiest way is to simply send me an email at [rabuncountyalliance@gmail.com](mailto:rabuncountyalliance@gmail.com)

A VERY Special Birthday Greeting to Charlie Brundage who just turned 90 Years Young!

Thanks for all of your hard work and dedication to our County!!!

