

Rabun County Alliance

formerly West Rabun Property Owners ~ Est. 2001



Spring 2021 Newsletter

“Seeking Leadership and Accountability in Government”

PASSING THE TORCH



Twenty years ago, Charlie Brundage and a group of concerned citizens formed the West Rabun Property Owners Association, which later became The Rabun County Alliance (RCA). The mission of the Rabun County Alliance is to improve a broad range of Government services provided in Rabun County. These areas include roads, bridges, water quality of streams and lakes, fire protection, waste removal, zoning, and the safety of our residents. Charlie has worked tirelessly for twenty years producing a quarterly newsletter covering these issues that help County residents stay informed.

Charlie has decided it is time to transition his efforts and responsibilities to a new President of the RCA, Ken Fortney. Over the next few months, Charlie will be assisting Ken,

in taking over his role as President of the Alliance. Ken, a 12-year resident of Rabun County ran for Rabun County Commissioner in 2018 and is a Rabun small business owner. He supports more openness in county government and more public communication of county issues.

The RCA through Ken’s future efforts will continue to keep the public informed on important issues, in the hope that we can motivate our elected officials to focus their efforts on what is best for our county. Please help us keep Charlie’s hard work and dedication going by continuing to use the Rabun County Alliance as a source of information and by helping us grow our membership. Tell a friend about our Newsletter or even better, contact us to get involved. There is always strength in numbers and the more residents that have knowledge of our county issues, and what our elected officials are doing about these issues, the better our County will be.

“I want to thank Charlie for all his hard work and dedication over the past twenty years—I know I have some big shoes to fill,” says Ken.

2021 COUNTY SALES AND TAX ASSESSMENT

The year 2020 has been an unusual year for property sales. Property prices have increased. Tax assessments for 2021 have been delivered, listing the new values and last year’s values. In most cases there is about a five percent increase because of the rise in recent property sales. The estimated new tax price is based on last year’s millage rate. There could be a reduction on the millage rate this year. There will be an increase in this year’s tax bills, but maybe not as much as the value increases.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR: Visit the Chamber of Commerce at gamountains.com for Rabun County events.

Visit georgiapowerlakes.com for helpful lake information from Georgia Power.

Visit lakerabun.org, lbca.net, and seedlake.org for the various Association events.

Men’s Christian Fellowship meets every Friday, 7:45–9:00am (706-782-7425 for more info).

Visit rabuncountyalliance.com for items of importance you may hear or wonder about between newsletters.

ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP

President
Ken Fortney
Treasurer
Charlie Brundage
V.P. Editor

V.P. Environment
Harold Taylor
V.P. Health Care
Dr. Guy Gober
V.P. Membership
Patricia Sheehan

V.P. Public Safety
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V.P. Roads
David Bacon

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Justin Upchurch
Neighborhood Watch
Stacye Morgan
Website
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COMMUNITY DENTAL CLINIC

Over three years ago, the Rotary Club of Clayton decided to find a signature project that could have a major impact on Rabun County. Healthcare all over the county and particularly rural areas has been a long-standing challenge in terms of cost and access to quality care. After evaluating options, Rotarians embarked on developing a dental clinic for adults.

Oral diseases are highly prevalent in Rabun County and pose a significant public health problem affecting most adults. The cause can be varied but one factor is that well water is not fluoridated. Tooth decay is chronic, progressive, and results in pain and missed work if not promptly and adequately treated. When evaluating the barriers to accessing oral health care, patients identify cost as the number one issue.

This clinic will provide low cost dental care to 4,200 low income Rabun County residents (estimated to be 30% of Rabun County adult population). Initially the clinic will be staffed by volunteer dentists, dental assistants, and screeners to save payroll costs. Seventeen dentists have volunteered to provide time, expertise, and staff to work at the clinic. Initially, the clinic will be open one day a month for extractions only. Public demand will determine how these services will be expanded. A \$10 supply cost will be paid by the patient.

The Rotary Club of Clayton is proud to be a part of this collaborative venture alongside passionate volunteers, the Rabun County Public Health Department, and the Rabun County Board of Commissioners.

SPLOST FUNDS AND ROAD PROJECTS

Rabun County's Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) program was approved in November 1992 and began collecting funds in April 1993 via a 1% sales tax levied locally in addition to the state-mandated sales tax rate. SPLOST programs are popular in part because they spread fund collection across a wider population base than other taxes (like property taxes).

A June 1995 article in the Clayton Tribune highlights one of the chief uses of the early SPLOST funds in Rabun County with a headline reading "Special Purpose Local Option Sale Tax paves 27 miles." With just two years of funding collected, the County performed the grading, graveling, and paving of 27 miles of previously unpaved County roads. This represents a notable and valuable improvement to County infrastructure, which is the intended goal of SPLOST programs.

Skipping ahead several years, a 2019 Georgia Department of Transportation report listed Rabun County's public road system as consisting of 63.5 miles of State highways (all paved), 204.3 miles of paved County roads, **149.7 miles of unpaved County roads**, and the City of Clayton's 73.1 miles of paved and 5.5 miles of unpaved roads.

The following list reports all SPLOST-funded work on Rabun County roads from 2012 through 2020, along with the significant amount of resurfacing already committed for 2021.

RESURFACING

Messer Creek	0.50	2012
Wolffork	2.00	2012
Bridge Creek	2.00	2012
Jerry Gap	0.14	2012
Deerfield	0.20	2013
Saddle Gap	0.30	2013
Screamer	0.10	2013
Germany Mountain	2.00	2013
Lake Rabun	2.60	2013
Yellow Rose/Finch	0.50	2014
Meeting House	1.20	2014
Warwoman	2.70	2014
Lake Rabun	1.90	2014
Rainey Mountain	1.30	2015
Black Rock	1.60	2015
Kellys Creek	2.20	2015
Blueridge Gap	0.20	2015
York House	1.85	2016
McCracken	1.10	2016
John Beck Dockins	0.68	2016
Murray Cove	0.78	2016
Bradford	0.45	2016
Crusher Run	0.20	2016
Camp Creek	1.35	2016
Screamer	0.15	2016
Coffee	0.10	2016
Laurel Lodge	0.15	2017
Messer Creek	0.10	2017
Wolffork	0.20	2018
Scotts Creek	0.10	2018
Big Basin	0.25	2018
Devils Branch	2.40	2018
Low Gap	1.20	2018
Warwoman	4.20	2019
Persimmon Creek	2.00	2019
Boggs Mountain	1.10	2019
Laurel Lodge	2.00	2019
Moses	0.10	2019
Glassway	0.50	2019
Burton Dam	2.70	2020
Wolffork	2.00	2020
Murray Cove	1.60	2020
Germany Mountain	1.70	2020
Bridge Creek	3.80	2020
Deer Hill	0.50	2020
TOTAL	54.70	

NEW PAVING

Bob Mark Trail	0.20	2012
Glass Way	0.50	2012
Crumley	0.50	2013
Billy Watts Cove	0.50	2013
Jones Branch	0.30	2013
Greenwood Lane	0.20	2013
Ayers	0.50	2013
Chester York	0.55	2013
Bellview	0.50	2013
Barn Inn	1.10	2013
Cathey Parker	0.20	2013
Coleman River	0.75	2014
Dock Coleman	1.00	2014
Oscar Rock	0.50	2014
Moccasin Creek	0.85	2015
Plum Orchard	0.75	2016
Chester York	0.25	2016
Barn Inn	0.25	2016
Stage Coach	0.20	2017
Biddy Mountain	0.20	2019
Cox Lake	0.15	2019
Boykin	0.75	2020
Deer Hill	0.20	2020

TOTAL 13.60

RESURFACING

PLANNED FOR 2021:

Lake Rabun	1.90	2021
Warwoman	3.50	2021
Seed Tick	1.50	2021
Bettys Creek	1.60	2021

TOTAL 8.50

With 42% of Rabun County's public roads unpaved (as of 2019), Rabun County Alliance is concerned with how few new paving projects have been undertaken by the County in recent years. Looking back to 1995's report of 27 miles of SPLOST-funded new paving achieved over two years, this list shows roughly half that amount achieved over the last nine years.

It is equally concerning that SPLOST funded resurfacing (which can be seen as ‘maintenance’) accounts for roughly four times the mileage of new paving projects (true ‘improvements’ to County infrastructure) over the last nine years shown in this list. That trend is highlighted by 2020’s 12.3 miles of resurfacing compared to 0.95 miles of new paving, and by 2021’s planned 8.50 miles of resurfacing.

LAPRADES MEMORIES

I worked there the summer of 1980. Great times! I drove the boat to go to work from Timpson Cove then back in the dark. I met some great people. We worked from 6:00 AM to when we got the restaurant cleaned, usually about 9:00 PM, 6 days a week. Only had Wednesdays off.

LaPrades was the original farm to table restaurant. Gardens, chicken houses, pigs, and more were all on the property. There was a field down by the lake where most of the vegetables were grown. It was the darkest bottom land soil and grew the best silver queen corn, green beans, okra, squash, and several other veggies that were served in the restaurant.

Owner Mr. Wallace Nichols, his wife Mrs. Rachael Nichols, Mrs. Burton, and Leon’s wife, worked in the kitchen, Robert Nichols worked more hours than there were in a day. I learned how to cut whole chickens, pick beans, cook hog fat for the lard, and a ton of other skills. My memories of the great LaPrades is etched into my brain and I will always cherish them.
—Ben Brundage

RABUN COUNTY SCHOOLS UPDATE

We are gearing up for the graduation season for the class of 2021. With COVID-19 cases still popping up in our area, indoor events will have tickets issued to each senior. This includes our Honors night on May 11 and our Baccalaureate service on May 27. Graduation will be held in the Frank Snyder Memorial Stadium on May 28 and is open to friends and family of the graduating seniors.

This summer Rabun County Schools will be providing a three-week summer school program for all grades. The focus of summer school is to address learning gaps from time out of school due to COVID-19. Enrollment is by invitation only to ensure we meet the greatest needs first. Rabun County Schools is utilizing CARES Act funds to provide this service.

When tennis season ends this May, the renovation of the courts will start. Through the support of our community, SPLOST funds will be used to renovate the current courts and add one additional court. The addition of a court will allow Rabun County High School to host tournaments.

Plans for the new Agri-science center (the farm) continue to develop and the goal is to break ground this summer.

Thank you all for your continued support. Go Cats! —
Superintendent Dr. April Childers

FIRE SERVICES

Rabun County Fire Services has responded to quite a few brush fires already this spring. I thought it would be a good time to review the regulations for open burning in our county.

A valid residential burn permit is required for the date of the burning. The permit can be issued by calling **1-877-OK2-BURN** (1-877-652-2876) or by logging on to www.gatrees.org and choosing the BURN PERMIT link in the left margin.

It is unlawful to burn man-made materials such as tires, roofing shingles, plastics, or household trash and garbage. It is equally unlawful to burn wiring insulation to obtain the copper wire.

A recreational fire for cooking food for immediate human consumption is allowed. “Warming” fires are also allowed during inclement weather for workers outdoors—provided only proper fuels are used.

All permitted burning is limited to:

- Leaves, limbs, and brush from the property on which it grew, provided the piles to be burned are no larger than 6 feet by 6 feet by 6 feet in size.
- Fire is attended by a responsible individual who has a reliable water supply on hand for fire control.
- Fire must be at least 50 feet away from the closest structure.
- Burning should take place between 10:00 AM and 30 minutes before dark.

All agricultural or other prescribed burning must be permitted by the local Georgia Forestry Commission office. The local number is 706-754-2354.

Land clearing utilizing Air Curtain Destructors must be approved, before use, by the Georgia Forestry Commission. Contractors may call 706-754-2354 for information or to request a site inspection.

Burning may NOT take place during any time period when banned by the Georgia Forestry Commission or the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Changes in weather that may increase the danger of fire spread or complaints from neighbors and other citizens may result in requiring that the fire be extinguished.

As always, if you have any needs or questions, please give me a call at 706-782-2751 or email me at jupchurch@rabuncounty.ga.gov. —Justin Upchurch



Rabun County Alliance

formerly West Rabun Property Owners

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LUCKY LANDSLIDE *This slide is about 100 feet wide and 50 feet deep. It is located on Timpson Cove on Lake Burton at 1050 Murray Cover Road. It left about a six foot bank behind it. The lucky part of this is, if it had been 50 feet either way, it would have involved a cabin, but thankfully it did miss both!*

SHERIFF'S REPORT

Come learn about your Sheriff's Office at the 2021 Citizens' Law Enforcement Academy!

I am pleased to announce the 2021 Citizens' Law Enforcement Academy beginning at 6pm on June 1 at the Rabun County Recreation Department (Old Gym). The eight-week course is conducted consecutively on Tuesday nights, ending on July 20. This informative course is provided at no cost for interested citizens of Rabun County. Each Tuesday night, participants will be instructed via presentation and interactive demonstrations regarding a variety of topics related to the Office of the Sheriff:

- Office of the Sheriff
- Law Enforcement challenges of the 21st century
- Use of force, de-escalation, and community policing
- Uniform Patrol Division – School Resource Deputies
- Criminal Investigations Division – K9 Program
- Courthouse Security and Civil Process
- Jail Division (to include a tour of the jail)

I open the Academy with a presentation regarding the history, purpose, and varying roles of the Office of the Sheriff. The overall course will not only be informative but fun and entertaining as well. Other guest speakers, as related to the topic and/or area of the legal system, are slated to present valuable

information as well. While the CLEA is free of charge and open to anyone, you must pre-register to attend. Applications are available at the Sheriff's Office, 25 Courthouse Square, Suite 301 or on our website, rabunsheriff.org under the useful links tab. Contact Lt. Mark Gerrells, CLEA facilitator, at 706.782.3612 for further information or clarification. Please return your completed application by May 26 for processing and confirmation of your attendance. We all look forward to seeing you there!

Another upcoming event is our 2nd Annual Celebrity Golf Tournament to raise money for the Georgia Sheriff's Youth Homes. This event will be held at the Waterfall Club on August 24, 2021 with participants teeing off at 10 am. The cost per team is \$800 and will include lunch. Different sponsorship levels are available. The former professional athletes will be announced as the event gets closer to the date. For registration and/or sponsorships contact Kim Rodriguez at 706-782-3612 or by email at kim.rodriguez@rabuncounty.ga.gov. For questions about the event, contact Sheriff Nichols at 706-960-9738 or email at chad.nichols@rabuncounty.ga.gov. If you would like more info on the Georgia Sheriff's Youth Homes you can visit their website at georgiasheriffsyouth.org or if you would like more information on the event venue you can visit their website at thewaterfallclub.com.

I look forward to our communities' participation in both of these events! —*Sheriff Chad Nichols*