

# COMMISSIONER TIMES

*SMALL TOWN LIVING ON THE BIG LAKE*

Volume 3, Issue 4 | September 2008

Published Quarterly

## New County Water System Launched!

The Clay County Board of Commissioners are excited to announce that our new well is now in service. Why is this a big deal? This project means that customers on our new water system have a reliable source of water. It also means that our customers will not have to rely on more costly water alternatives, such as drilled wells. The water from this new well is more than 60,000 years old and is very pristine. We can produce enough water from this well to more than adequately supply the average daily consumption to our customers.



Most of our local shallow water wells contain "hard" water. That is, the water contains large amounts of calcium, is high in iron and hydrogen sulfide and other minerals which makes it "hard" and causes scale on

your fixtures and often results in red or muddy water which stains your clothes.

Our new water is considered "soft" water. What does "soft" water mean to you? According to New Mexico State University, soft water can save you money because the lifespan of appliances such as water heaters, washing machines, and dishwashers can be increased by as much as 30% because when hard water is heated the minerals in the water can evaporate out and form scales in your appliances. By using soft water you can add more than three years to the life of most of your appliances.

Chore-doers will love using soft water, as tasks can actually be performed more efficiently with it. You will need less soap for each load of clothes and for each load of dishes. Soap will lather better and items will be left cleaner, glasses will sparkle and hair will look healthy, the shower curtain will be scum free, and clothes and skin are left softer. The old saying that you get "squeaky clean" is a myth; that feeling

was caused by the soap scum on your skin. By the way, that soap scum provides an excellent place for bacteria to hide and grow, causing numerous minor skin ailments.

In summary, some of the benefits of soft water are:

- Makes glasses, dishes, and fixtures sparkle and shine
- Eliminates soap, rust, and calcium deposits and makes for cleaner (silky feeling) skin and hair
- Saves considerable cleaning time
- Saves up to 50% of washing powder and soap consumption, and cuts the use of shampoos, conditioners, and cleaning products
- Can remove existing scale deposits in hot water systems and shower heads as well as scale around taps and stains in baths and basins
- Can help with certain dry skin conditions such as eczema
- Improves the efficiency of water heating systems – just 1/16 inch of scale will cause a 12 percent loss in heating efficiency

If you are new to the area or didn't sign up for water in the initial contract phase, it's not too late to sign up and take advantage of our great water system. The system currently serves residents in the East and Northeast portion of the county from Fort Gaines North. Contact our Customer Service for details of water connections and if you are in our service area at 229.768.3238.



## Georgia Department of Transportation Southwest Georgia Interstate Study Public Involvement Meeting Schedule

In Fall 2007, the Georgia Department of Transportation initiated the Southwest Georgia Interstate Study to identify all roadway capacity and operational needs to improve Southwest Georgia's access to I-185, I-75 and I-10. The study includes Baker, Brooks, Calhoun, Chattahoochee, Clay, Colquitt, Cook, Crisp, Decatur, Dooly, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marion, Miller, Mitchell, Muscogee, Quitman, Randolph, Schley, Seminole, Stewart, Sumter, Terrell, Thomas, Tift, Turner, Webster, and Worth Counties.

To date, existing conditions related to current capacity and safety needs, environmental constraints, local development trends, and community benefits have been evaluated. Development of a "regional travel model" that estimates future year travel conditions is currently underway.

Public meetings will be held to allow feedback to GDOT. Please plan to attend a public meeting which will consist of a formal presentation, followed by a discussion session and will begin promptly at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting for our area will be held on Monday, September 15, 2008 at the Blakely Civic Center, 170 Rose Drive, Blakely, GA. From US 27 Bypass heading south, take right onto SR62 Bypass. At first traffic signal, take right onto Old US 27N. Take a right on Rose Drive; travel 1 block/ Center is on the right.

If you need special accommodations as provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact:

Mr. Jabari Parker,

GDOT Project Manager  
404.631.1791 or email at

[japarker@dot.ga.gov](mailto:japarker@dot.ga.gov)

For additional information go to:  
[www.swgainterstate.com](http://www.swgainterstate.com)

**Here's Your Chance to Help Keep Georgia Beautiful.**

**Order your Recycle 4 Georgia license plate today.** It's easy and it doesn't matter if your birthday has already passed. One thousand orders are needed for the Department of Revenue to manufacture the new recycling tag.

The cost for the new tag is \$25 with a \$10 donation going to the Keep Georgia Beautiful Foundation – a double win! Your money will help a great environmental cause and your license plate will promote one of the easiest forms of everyday environmentalism: recycling!

**It's easy:**

Get an order form from [www.KeepGeorgiaBeautiful.org](http://www.KeepGeorgiaBeautiful.org). Fill out the form and take it to your county tag office. You can also pick up the form at your county tag office. Tell your local county tag office you want the Recycle 4 Georgia tag that is listed under the "Beautification Projects in Georgia" or the "RG" tag category. Please note the \$25 application cost is in addition to the standard \$20 registration fee. You will be refunded your application fee if 1,000 orders are not placed by December 31, 2008.



**Help us reach 1,000 orders so everyone can be reminded to Recycle 4 Georgia!**

**INCREASING KNOWLEDGE**

*Congratulations to our county leaders for continuing to learn!*

- Genia Johnson has received her Paramedics License.
- Geneva English attended Magistrate training.
- Lisa Shivers attended Election Training June 1-5.
- Patty Ellis & Pam Ward attended a grant writing class on 8/20/08.
- Freddie Ingram completed Board of Equalization training.
- Willie Hawkins completed EMS Instructor Training

**General Election**

will be held **November 4, 2008**. If you are not a registered voter, the last date you can register to vote and be eligible to vote in the General Election is October 6, 2008.

**Fort Gaines 8th Annual Senior Softball Tournament**

**Saturday  
October 18, 2008**

**Gulbrandson Field  
Fort Gaines GA**

**Double Elimination**

**To register to play  
or for more information,  
contact**

**Morrie Gulbrandson  
at 229.768.3400.**

**Sponsored by**

**Fort Gaines**

**Clay County Recreation Commission**



**Fort Gaines Golf Tournament**

**October 17, 2008**

**9:00 a.m. - Putting Contest**

**10:00 a.m. Tournament Begins**

*Meadow Links Golf Course*

**To register to play  
or for more information,  
contact**

**Morrie Gulbrandson  
at 229.768.3400**



# ***SPECIAL INSERT—COMMISSIONER TIMES***

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Community Meeting Notes</h2>			
		August 25, 2008 7:00 PM	
		GT Bagby State Park	
<b>Meeting called by:</b>	The Community	<b>Type of meeting:</b>	Forum / Informative
<b>Facilitator:</b>	Trey Anderson	<b>Note taker:</b>	Pam Ward / Trey Anderson
<b>Attendees:</b>	Approximately 105 to 120 Persons were in attendance		
	<i>NOTE: These meeting notes are not intended to be formal minutes, but merely a recap of items discussed, action items identified, and suggestions made.</i>		
MEETING NOTES / RECAP			
<b>Agenda item:</b>	<b>Why Are We Here? / Introductions</b>	<b>Presenter:</b>	Trey Anderson and Sam Johnson
<b>Discussion:</b>	<p>Trey Anderson, Chairman of the Clay County Board of Commissioners, opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Chairman Anderson reviewed comments made at recent Board of Commissioner meetings about the public concerns and perceptions about recent crimes in Clay County / Fort Gaines / Bluffton Communities. Furthermore, he stated that this meeting is not about placing blame, but more to identify the problems and offer solutions. A Meeting Agenda was provided to all attendees and the Chairman explained the intent of the meeting and suggested rules of order for the remainder of the meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman then recognized the Clay County Commissioners and special guests who were in attendance. Then the Chairman recognized Sam Johnson, Mayor of City of Fort Gaines, who recognized City Officials who were in attendance.</p>		
<b>Conclusions:</b>	None		
<b>Action items</b>	None	<b>Entity responsible</b>	N/A
<b>Agenda item:</b>	<b>Recent Crime Spree / Law Enforcement Comments</b>	<b>Presenter:</b>	Roger Shivers & Sonny Davis
<b>Discussion:</b>	<p>Chairman Anderson reviewed the crime events that have occurred over the past three months and asked Sheriff Roger Shivers to address the audience. The Chairman specifically asked the Sheriff to provide an update on each event and information on what other resources are involved in solving the crimes and what measures the Sheriff's department was taken to address the long term safety of the community. Sheriff Shivers provided a brief overview of the investigative status of each crime, provided some details of individuals who were arrested, and advised that resources from several state agencies were involved in assisting the department in solving the other crimes.</p> <p>After a few questions from the audience, the Sheriff provided some history on crime in Clay County and provided some "hard truths" for everyone to consider. Specifically, his comments underscored that the recent events were more prominent since the crimes were not the past pattern of black-on-black crime versus black-on-white crime. He also explained that over his 30 year career as a law enforcement officer he is now arresting the third generation of juveniles and adults who have been born and raised in poverty and who have little or no education.</p> <p>Several more comments and questions were raised by the audience and, at the request of a citizen, Police Chief Sonny Davis addressed the City curfew and loitering in the business district. Chief Davis stated that his staff is trying to enforce the curfew/loitering issue and the City Council had approved the addition of two additional officers to provide 24/7 coverage in the City Limits.</p>		

<b>Conclusions:</b>	It was clearly understood that loitering and curfew are significant issues that need to be addressed within the business district of Fort Gaines.		
<b>Action items</b>	<b>Entity Responsible</b>		
Revisit Curfew Ordinance	City of Fort Gaines		
Revisit Loitering Ordinance	City of Fort Gaines		
Publish Crime Statistics	Police Chief & Sheriff		
<b>Agenda item:</b>	<b>Recent Crime Spree / District Attorney Comments</b>	<b>Presenter:</b>	Charles Ferguson, Craig Earnest and Jerry Farrow
<b>Discussion:</b>	<p>After comments from Law Enforcement officials, Chairman Anderson asked the current District Attorney, Charles Ferguson, and District Attorney Elect, Craig Earnest, to address the audience about their efforts to prosecute criminals who are responsible for these recent events.</p> <p>Charles Ferguson first addressed the audience with a history of his involvement with the District Attorney's office over his thirty year career. He explained that there have been many changes, some good, some bad. Some of the bad news focused on the fact, that the Georgia Prison system is overcrowded, and the DA's efforts to prosecute and the judges ability to sentence have been greatly undermined by early release of convicted criminals. Furthermore, Mr. Ferguson stated that recent cut-backs from the State of Georgia are closing or hampering the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) efforts to process evidence which only complicates their ability to effectively prosecute a case. The good news offered by Mr. Ferguson is that the District Attorney's office now has many more resources to assist victims of crime and assist witnesses' follow-thru with testimony that helps convict criminals and put them into the prison system; unfortunately, many return to the streets in a very short period of time.</p> <p>From a remark from the audience, Mr. Ferguson addressed the issue of school kids on the street during normal school hours. It appeared that it was unknown to most in attendance that there is a system in place that is supposed to address this issue. Each school system is to have a Truancy Protocol Committee and Officer that is charged with keeping kids in school by advising their parents of absences. The Clay County School System principal briefly addressed the audience by stating that our school system has this system in place; however, the Truancy Protocol Committee has not been very active.</p> <p>Mr. Ferguson then introduced Craig Earnest as the successor to his office starting in 2009. Mr. Earnest stated that Clay County/Fort Gaines/Bluffton is no different than any other community in the Pataula District. We all have crime, and we all have a prevalent drug culture. He stated that unlike some of the other counties in the district, Clay County has not seen the increase in crystal meth and that our community is still primarily a cocaine-driven drug culture. While neither of these are acceptable, Mr. Earnest eluded that crystal meth substance abuse appears to be more destructive to the user, family and community. In light of the bad news, he stated that there is one violent crime statistic that is drastically down – Capital Murder. At this time, not a single county in the Pataula District has an active murder case.</p> <p>In closing, Mr. Earnest applauded the efforts of the community to have this truly unique Town hall meeting to openly address our problems. To his knowledge, no other community in the district has ever taken this step, and he offered his assistance. He also underscored the importance of every citizen in performing his/her civic duty to serve as a juror when summoned.</p> <p>Prompted from a remark from the audience, Parole Officer Jerry Farrow briefly addressed the parole officers' role and their efforts to assist parolees in their re-introduction into society.</p>		
<b>Conclusions:</b>	As the District Attorney's staff concluded their comments, Chairman Anderson stated that it was important for the citizens of Clay County/Fort Gaines/Bluffton to understand the challenges facing both law enforcement and the District Attorney's office. An overcrowded prison system coupled with early releases only underscores the importance for the community, parents, churches and civic organizations to help our citizens overcome some of the issues that create/foster the criminal behavior evident in our community.		

<b>Action items</b>		<b>Person responsible</b>	
Truancy Officer / System for Schools		Clay County Schools	
Jury Duty		Every Citizen	
<b>Agenda item:</b>	<b>Public Comments &amp; Questions</b>	<b>Pre-sender:</b>	
<b>Discussion:</b>	<i>This section of the recap is intended to capture the primary issues and ideas that were presented throughout the meeting and recorded on the flip charts. Several of the items noted with an asterisk were added following adjournment by citizens who were reluctant to address a large crowd.</i>		
<b>Conclusions:</b>			
<p>Based on comments that we received both during and after the meeting, I think every attendee will agree that this meeting was a great start to address the issues that our community faces. Many ideas were presented, some of which are easily accomplished, some of which will be difficult challenges. In closing, Chairman Anderson suggested that a group of volunteer/activists will organize a meeting to draft a proclamation for presentation to the City Councils and Board of Commissioners requesting action.</p> <p>POST MEETING NOTE from TREY ANDERSON: Tentatively, I would like to have a committee of five to seven members to review the issues and ideas brought forth and then prepare a draft proclamation. This document will then be circulated to all attendees and a new town hall meeting date will be established for purposes of endorsing the document for submission to the governmental entities. It is my goal to see this accomplished before October 31, 2008. Those wishing to be <u>active participants</u> in this process should submit their names to Pam Ward (768.3238 Ext. 7 or email at administrator@claycountyga.org) no later than September 12, 2008.</p>			
<b>ISSUES</b>		<b>IDEAS</b>	
Loitering		Curfew – More Enforcement	
Kids not in School		Focus More Tax Dollars on Issues	
Parole Issues		Reward System for Crime Information	
Out of Town Drug Commerce		Neighborhood Watch	
YDC School (Youth Detention)		Video Surveillance	
Drug Paraphernalia Sales by Local Vendors *		Seven County Effort	
Parole Violators *		Petition General Assembly for Help	
Lack of Coordination between Sheriff and Police Chief *		Consolidation of Law Enforcement and/or Governments	
Unemployment *		Electronic Surveillance of Parolees	
		Publish Records of Crime Incidents	
		License Checks	
		Reverse E911 System	
		Signs – “Police Enforcement”	
		Community Watch Dogs *	
		Take Back Community Event *	

OTHER INFORMATION

**Observers:**

Southern Tribune Staff and Citizen News Staff

**Special notes:**

The town hall meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

## Understanding Clay County Codes

One of the biggest issues with code enforcement is understanding the various requirements of the County Code of Ordinances. Within these many codes, the most violated ordinances are in the area of Planning and Zoning. To help prevent and correct any possible violations of our Planning and Zoning ordinances, we will be highlighting certain codes. The following sections are our most abused ordinances:

### **12.12 – Storage of Certain Vehicles and Equipment**

The storage of certain vehicles and equipment (defined as automobiles, semi-trailer trucks with greater than three (3) axles, camping or travel trailers and boats and boat motors without current license plates is prohibited in residential districts for time periods in excess of seven (7) days unless such vehicles and equipment are stored in a carport, enclosed building, or behind the nearest portion of a building to a street.

*Simple Solution:* Move your vehicle or equipment behind your house or a nearby building OR get a current tag for the vehicle.



### **14.2 – Building Permit Required**



It shall be unlawful to commence the excavation for or the construction of any building or other structure, or erect temporary field offices, or to commence the moving, alteration, or repair (with the exception of necessary repairs not affecting the external or party walls, chimneys, stairways, or heights of buildings) of any structure until the building inspector or other designated agent has issued a building permit for such work including a statement that the plans, specifications, and intended use of such structure in all respects conform with the provisions of this ordinance. Application for a building permit shall be made to the building inspector or other designated agent on forms

provided for that purpose.

*Simple Solution:* Before you begin any construction, contact the county administration office to confirm if a building permit is required and what, if any, information will be needed before the permit can be issued. If construction is within the existing footprint of the structure such as repairing a roof or interior remodeling, you probably do not have to have a building permit. If you are doing new construction or adding to an existing structure, you will most likely need a permit.

### **§ 50.24 ACCUMULATION.**

(A) No owner or occupant of any premises in the unincorporated areas of Clay County shall allow litter or waste to accumulate thereon. No owner or occupant of any such property shall bury or burn litter or waste without prior authorization and permission from the applicable Regulatory Agency, including but not limited to, the Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Protection Division and/or the Georgia Forestry Service.

Nothing in this provision shall authorize or be construed to permit the burial or burning of any material which is otherwise prohibited by state or federal law.

(B) No owner or occupant of any property shall allow the accumulation on his or her premises of garbage or waste where such material creates or causes a health hazard to neighbors or other citizens or which is unsightly or emits foul or obnoxious odors.

(C) The conduct described in divisions (A) and (B) of this section shall constitute a separate violation of this section for each day the garbage or waste material remains on such premises.

(D) Any person, firm or corporation found to be in violation of this section shall be issued a warning citation. Upon being issued a warning, a 30-day period will be allowed for the owner or occupant to correct the violation. If not corrected within 30 days, a citation shall be issued for violation of this chapter.

*Simple Solution:* Household garbage should be deposited in appropriate refuse cans OR taken to the landfill if the refuse qualifies.





**Notes from the Bookshelf**

**What's Happening at the Clay County Library**

**Closing Books Shuts Out Ideas.**

Read a Banned Book, September 27 – October 4

What do "To Kill a Mockingbird", "Of Mice and Men", and "The Color Purple" have in common? They have all made the list of "100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000".

Banned Books Week celebrates the freedom to choose and the freedom to express one's opinion even if that opinion might be considered unorthodox or unpopular. It stresses the importance of ensuring the availability of those viewpoints to all who wish to read them. After all, intellectual freedom can exist only where these two essential conditions are met. Observed since 1982, Banned Books Week reminds Americans not to take this precious democratic freedom for granted.

Stop by the library during the week of Sept 27. Pick out something from our display of favorite banned books. Exercise your freedom to read.

**Hancock Street Used Book Store to Open**

After a few false starts, the Friends of the Library's used book store on Hancock Street in the old City Market. We'll be open for sure on two dates:

65-Mile Yard Sale, Saturday, November 8

Christmas at the Fort, Saturday, November 22

As usual, we ask for a donation to the library in exchange for all the books you care to take. Once we get set up, the book store will be open on a regular basis. Hours and days to be determined. Book store volunteers will not only get free books, but also first dibs! The Clay County Library is open Monday – Friday, 9 – 6 and Saturday, 9-5. Call 229-768-2248 for more information on any of the programs.

**DISPOSING OF YARD WASTE**

Please note the Clay County Refuse Department DOES NOT pick up yard waste such as limbs, leaves, trees, etc. These items must be mulched or burned using state Forestry Department guidelines or otherwise disposed of. Please do not place your yard waste on the county right of way.



Placing yard waste on the county right of way causes a safety hazard for passing motorists and pedestrians. Placing yard waste in the ditches causes backed up or stopped up storm drains. This in turn causes the water to back up and wash across or wash out drive ways costing the tax payers more tax dollars for repairs.

**Last Chance to Sign Up**

Monday, September 15th is the last date to sign up for financial assistance. If you are a moderate to low income family, you may qualify for CDBG grant assistance for the installation and connection of the water lines from the water meter to your home.

Anyone on the new Clay County Water System who has not already connected to the water meter, may request an application from the County Clerk at 105 North Washington Street in Fort Gaines. You may also call 768.3238 Ext. 6 for further details.



Assistance is being made on a first come first served basis until the funds are all expended or September 15th, whichever comes first.

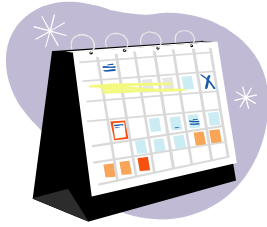


**THE NEW GEORGIA ENCYCLOPEDIA**

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Log on to: [www.georgiaencyclopedia.org](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org)

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## Mark Your Calendar for These Events!

**General Elections**—November 4th  
Please Vote!

The County's new fiscal year begins  
October 1, 2008 thru Sept. 30, 2009.

**Halloween Street Dance**—Friday, Oct. 31, 2008 @ Big Bad  
Wolf Saloon sponsored by the Fort Gaines Historic Society

**65 Mile Yard Sale**—Saturday Nov. 8th—Contact Leata Gleaton  
(768.3541) or Sylvia Olmstead (768-3752) for details.

**Christmas at the Fort**—November 22, 2008 (768-2248)

**Annual Christmas Parade**—December 13, 2008

**Tour of Homes**—December 13, 2008 (768-2248)

## REFUSE PICKUP HOLIDAY NOTICE

Refuse trucks will not run on Labor Day, September  
1st, November 27th & 28th or December 25th and  
26th in observance of the holiday.



Service will resume on the first  
workday after the holiday. Please  
be patient with the refuse staff as  
they work hard to keep Clay  
County clean.



Clay Co. Commissioners  
105 North Washington St.  
P O Box 519  
Fort Gaines, GA 39851

We're on the web: [www.claycountyga.org](http://www.claycountyga.org)

## Schedule of Events

Clay County Board of Commission meetings are held the first  
and third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Clay  
County Courthouse Annex with the exception of December.  
The only regular meeting in December will be on the first  
Tuesday of December.

Economic Development Council meetings will be held the  
first Monday of each month (except on holidays) at the Social  
Services Building located behind the Health Department and  
DFCS office at 1:00 p.m.

Family Connections meets the fourth Tuesday of each month  
at 11:00 a.m. at the new Social Services Building behind the  
Health Dept. All Clay residents, business owners and faith  
based organizations are invited to participate.

Planning & Zoning Commission business meetings are held  
the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5:00 p.m. in the Clay  
County Commission Chambers. Planning & Zoning Public  
Hearings are held on an "as needed" basis. Contact County  
Clerk for schedule.

### UPCOMING COUNTY HOLIDAYS

County Offices will be closed on the  
following date:

Sept 1st—Labor Day

Nov 27th & 28th—Thanksgiving

December 25th & 26th—Christmas

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Fort Gaines, GA 39851

TO: