



INTUCKER

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GOOD THINGS COME...

CITY OF TUCKER MAKING THINGS HAPPEN BY PERSEVERING, PRACTICING PATIENCE

EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to springtime in Tucker! For those of us with seasonal allergies, this is the beginning of a long and frustrating period fraught with an abundance of Claritin and Kleenex. But it's also the start of a lot of excitement in the City.

This month, the ninth annual Tucker Chili Cook-off kicks off our Main Street events series. In the coming months, tens of thousands of people will flock to downtown for Cruise-Ins, Tucker Day, Movie on Main, July 3 fireworks and much, much more.

I really hope to see you, though, on March 14 for the Chili Cook-off. City Hall will have a chili entered in the Cook-off, as we have done since 2017. We are also supporting the City's Complete Count Committee, a group of volunteers and public servants trying to educate and get the word out about the upcoming U.S. Census. As we brainstormed about ways to connect with folks ahead of the Census, we realized one of the ways to your heart is through your stomach. With that in mind, Councilman Matt Robbins, who is chairing the Complete Count Committee, will be working with his team to feed you, inform you and tell you why completing your Census form is critical to Tucker's resources and infrastructure in the decade ahead.

So, if you can stand the pollen, I hope you'll join us at the Chili Cook-off. Feel free to vote for our chili, if you're so inclined. And a pro tip: bring Roloids.



MATT HOLMES
INTUCKER EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE



From the Cover

Progress takes time, especially when you're dealing with complicated, multi-jurisdictional issues. On page 3, Mayor Auman looks at how progress for a Tucker eyesore finally came about.



Six in a Row

On page 10, read about Tucker's Premier Science Olympiad team, learn some of the secrets to their success and find out how they're aiming for a seventh consecutive appearance at the state competition.



On the Beat

A despicable crime committed at a popular shopping center in broad daylight and the bad guys caught almost immediately. On page 5, discover how good police work combined with technology to bring the suspects to justice.



Business Boom

Tucker's Mayor and City Council have voted to accept the City's first-ever Downtown Master Plan. On page 9, John McHenry analyzes what that means for Tucker's residents and business owners.



Ask Rip

"What the deal with all the construction happening at Tucker's parks?" Have you heard that question? Rip has and he's got answers on page 15.



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From the Mayor:

THE PATH TO PROGRESS



"Good things come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle."

~Misattributed to Abraham Lincoln, but true nonetheless~

Sometimes we joke with each other on the City Council that by the time we get to the successful end of a really big project or undertaking, we feel like we're stumbling across the finish line, too tired to even celebrate. Some of the hardest lessons we've learned as your Council have to do with how long things take to get done, and the frustrating combination of simultaneous patience and hustle that are required for nearly everything we pursue.

I asked for some additional space in this month's magazine because it's hard to understand sometimes just how complex the issues facing our city can be. From crime to roads and transportation, parks and sidewalks, your city staff and elected leaders are working every day to find solutions to the problems we face today,

while we also pursue a vision for the future that we all hope for. Unfortunately, none of it happens overnight. For a myriad of reasons, usually a combination of people, money and law, an issue that you and I think should be an easy fix can often take weeks, months, or in the case of the sinkhole on Lawrenceville Highway, years to resolve.

So, let's talk about that sinkhole as one example.

From crime to roads and transportation, parks and sidewalks, your city staff and elected leaders are working every day to find solutions to the problems we face today, while we also pursue a vision for the future that we all hope for.

Back in June of 2017, what we've called a sinkhole, but is more properly an erosion problem resulting from a compromised piped stream under Lawrenceville Highway, had developed on the private property where Tucker Tire was located. The City of Tucker did two things immediately: our Code Enforcement Department issued a notice of violation to the property owner, requiring him to repair the problem on his property, and we worked with all the appropriate authorities (GDOT, DeKalb County, the Fire Marshal) to ensure that any risk to Lawrenceville Highway and surrounded properties was properly mitigated. Of course, everyone who receives such a notice of violation has the right to a legal process and that process can take time. As the process played out, we worked with the DeKalb County Fire Marshal to have the property owner install safety

(Continued on page 6)

City Council Update



Tucker's Mayor and City Council met twice during the month of February. The first meeting took place on February 10 with the Council getting a presentation on the City's Downtown Master Plan. After being briefed, Council voted unanimously to accept the plan, which has been in the works since early 2019, was completed in collaboration with the Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District (CID) and lays out a vision and strategy for the future of Tucker's historic downtown area.

Council then gave approval to a pair of ordinances. The first was a move to amend the City's budget calendar, allowing more time for revenue projections to be compiled before a draft budget is actually presented to the Council. Next, they approved a small cell ordinance. This ordinance aligns the City of Tucker Code with state regulations when it comes to streaming wireless facilities and antennae.

In a series of smaller votes, the Council approved:

- an amended contract with professional service provider Jacobs
- an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the Public Facility Authority for a lease on a new City Hall
- an IGA with DeKalb County for upcoming parks projects
- adding to the Parks and Recreation fee schedule

Council met again on February 24, approving a road resurfacing contract with E.R. Snell Contractor, Inc. E.R. Snell will

complete work on 79 streets within the city limits of Tucker, a \$4.4 million project that will be paid for with SPLOST funds.

Council also voted 6-0 to grant a deferral of a rezoning and concurrent variances for a proposed 13.99-acre commercial complex at the intersection of Hugh Howell Road and Mountain Industrial Boulevard. The issue will come back for a second read and anticipated vote at the Council meeting on March 9.

They then voted to authorize an agreement for the installation of 133 solar panels on the roof of Tucker Recreation Center. Over time, the panels are expected to generate 86 percent of the energy needed to power the building.

The next City Council meeting will be March 9 at 7 p.m. at the City Hall Annex (4228 First Avenue).



On February 10, Mayor Auman presented a proclamation to DeKalb Emergency Management Director Chief Sue Loeffler. Loeffler retired in January after 27 years in service to DeKalb County and the Tucker community. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

DATES TO KNOW

March 9

City Council

March 11

Community Council

March 17

Zoning Board of Appeals

March 18

Municipal Court

March 23

City Council

March 25

Municipal Court

March 26

Planning Commission

TUCKER SOCIAL



 **Nextdoor**

ON THE BEAT *with Lt. Schoeppner*

Lt. D.G. Schoeppner is Tucker's liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department and can be followed at [facebook.com/dgschoeppner](https://www.facebook.com/dgschoeppner) or emailed at dgschoeppner@dekalbcountyga.gov



Just last month I had talked about how DeKalb County Police are partnering with technology companies like “Ring” and “FLOCK Safety” in order to help us solve crimes. Here we are just over a month later and I have an example of how we are putting this technology to good use in supporting solid police work.

On Valentine’s Day, our officers responded to a robbery call in the parking lot of the Tucker Meridian shopping center at Lavista Road and Northlake Parkway. The male victim said that he was walking in the parking lot of the shopping center when he was approached by three suspects. These suspects began to assault the victim and rifle through his pockets. After taking a substantial amount of money the suspects fled the scene in a black Nissan Maxima.

Our detectives wasted no time using tag reading cameras in the area to search for cars that matched the description of the suspects vehicle. They discovered a match to a rental car out of Texas. We put a lookout on the vehicle, and it was stopped the following day down in Troup County. It was presumably on the way back to Texas.

Lieutenant Stanfield and Detective England traveled to Troup County to interview the suspects. When they arrived, they discovered that two of the suspects were wearing the same clothes from the robbery the previous day. The detectives were also contacted by the police agency where the car was rented from in Texas. The police down there were looking at these same suspects for several robberies in the Lone Star State. The suspects from the vehicle were all charged with robbery and brought back to DeKalb County.

These suspects had no affiliation with the victim. They also lived out of state. These two facts probably made the suspects confident of being able to get away with assaulting and robbing someone in broad daylight. If it wasn’t for our embracing new technology the chances are high that they would have gotten away with it. But because of our forward thinking and diligent detective work, these suspects now have to answer for their crimes. Hopefully the word will get out that Tucker is not the place to commit crimes like this.

THE PATH TO PROGRESS (continued from page 3)



Remediation of the sinkhole along Lawrenceville Highway has required creativity, persistence and partnership among government agencies. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

fencing around the property. Later that year, the building was declared uninhabitable and the property owner was forced to tear it down.

All that took nearly two years and folks rightly had become frustrated, not only because the problem wasn't being fixed, but also because they didn't know why.

At that point, we as a city had done about all we could do except to leverage our partnership with DeKalb County and GDOT to ensure the site was secure and not a danger to the public. In the meantime, we waited as the property owner pursued his various legal options in the matter, including suing or threatening to sue everyone from the City to the County to GDOT.

On November 30, 2018, after 17 months of closely following how this issue was playing out in the courts and coming to the conclusion that this problem was up to the owner to address, the City exercised

its enforcement powers and again issued a notice of violation to the property owner. The case went back to our Municipal Court, where the judge facilitated a consent order in which the City agreed to forgiveness of fines (which had grown into the hundreds of thousands of dollars) in exchange for the property owner meeting very specific milestones on a guaranteed path to the full remediation of the property. This was a huge triumph for our staff and an example of what we can do as a city.

All that took nearly two years and folks rightly had become frustrated, not only because the problem wasn't being fixed, but also because they didn't know why. And all along, of course, we had to be careful not to talk publicly about pending litigation and other legal matters. Since nature abhors a vacuum (in this case a vacuum of information), citizens and the media attempted to fill in the details, with varying degrees of facts and accuracy. Neighbors created a (mostly good-natured) Tucker Crater Facebook page, Channel 46 did a story, and other local media jumped into the fray. For our part, we had to carry on in the face of lots of criticism and questions we couldn't answer publicly. It's all now

near a happy ending, but not without lots of frustration with the time it has taken.

This isn't the first problem we've tried to solve here in Tucker that has taken much longer than we would have liked. Remember the whole push for cityhood? A group of residents began organizing and advocating for Tucker to become a city way back in 2013. We didn't actually become a city until 2016. In the three years in between, we got a rude awakening at just how long and complex the legislative process is under the Gold Dome. There were times when we got discouraged and impatient, but we learned that the system doesn't work fast; if we're well-prepared, diligent, persistent, and occasionally a little lucky, it produces the desired result.

Here's another example from 2017: we had been receiving very vocal complaints about the safety of the intersection of Fellowship Road and Lawrenceville Highway. Drivers were cutting across a turn lane to go straight, risking fender benders or head-on collisions, and backing up traffic. I heard a lot of frustration from folks who didn't think the City was doing enough or that we were just sitting on our hands. In reality, our engineering team was working behind the scenes to push GDOT and DeKalb County to help us reconfigure the intersection. Remember that Lawrenceville Highway is a state route; we as a city are not allowed to make any changes to a state route. There's a process and it can be a lengthy one. But when we finally lined up all the permissions and participants, budgeted and received the money, it got done pretty quickly, and I dare say not many people even remember how painful that intersection once was. We are currently working with GDOT to get results on several other intersections including Lavista Road at Chamblee Tucker Road and US-78 at Brockett Road. We've been working hard, but the permanent solution is still in the future.

One of the big priorities for me as mayor was to address some of our crime challenges. Tucker is a safe place to live, and the numbers certainly bear that out, but any municipality is going to have certain areas where crime is higher. Without identifying the location, we had residents in a nice, quiet Tucker neighborhood who came to me and the City Council looking for help. There was one house on the street where a young man was living and where there was clearly some drug and other illicit activity. This led to concern among the neighbors over safety and they were reaching out to their city leadership to do something.

I think everyone's first question in that situation was, "What exactly can we as a city can do?" In talking with our Code Enforcement team and our liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department, we

As of this writing, that sinkhole on Lawrenceville Highway is still a sinkhole. There's still speculation and misinformation going around, but because the legal process has played out, I can tell you where we are.

realized that there were steps the City could take to help, using a combination of code enforcement, the police, and pressure on the property owner. Long story short, about a year later the young man was out of the house and it was on the market. I've since talked with some of those neighbors and I cannot describe to you how



City leaders and DeKalb County Police have been actively involved with the apartment homes along Juliette Road. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

grateful they are. They probably wish something could have been done quicker, but ultimately, they understood how hard we were working to achieve the end result.

There are other, more complicated crime hotspots we're currently working to address that are going to take some time. Our economic development, legal and planning staff are working on it. Our DeKalb County Tucker Precinct officers are working on it. Our business and commercial property owners are working on it. I'm hoping that at some point in the future we will have positive news to share on that front.

As of this writing, that sinkhole on Lawrenceville Highway is still a sinkhole. There's still speculation and misinformation going around, but because the legal process has played out, I can tell you where we are.

Earlier this year, the City of Tucker worked with GDOT to issue a building permit to the property owner's contractor. The consent order stipulates that work to fix and fill the sinkhole needed to start on or before February 17. I'm glad to say that, despite the weather, that benchmark was met. There are additional benchmarks coming up later this spring that will have to be met. The end result will be complete remediation of the property. No more sinkhole, no more unattractive fencing, no more safety barriers.

So much of the credit for this goes to our incredible city staff. Our Community and Economic Development team worked tirelessly with our City Attorney to figure out the best way to address the issue with the property owner. Our Superintendent, Land Development Manager and City Engineer worked with consultants to inspect and ensure that when this is finally fixed, it is fixed for good. Our Communications team did a great job fighting all their instincts to get on a bullhorn to correct the record and share the facts. That is their job, after all, but when these kinds of legal matters are at play, we are very limited in what we should say, and I appreciate them being team players.

The progress we hope for as a city has never been easy, and it apparently will never be as fast as it looks like it should be. But the work we do now to create the future we want for ourselves and our children and those who come after us is worth it and will continue to be in the years to come.

FRANK AUMAN
MAYOR

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

HIGH CARD/BLUE TARP BREWERY



In 2018, the team at Tucker Brewing Company brought a new concept to Tucker's industrial corridor. While their state-of-the-art brewery and biergarten became the toast of the town, Alan Pugh and his business partners were already plotting their own move to Tucker.

"I live here in Tucker, just three miles from the brewery. I like the downtown area and how it is coming along and we just wanted to part of that," said Pugh, one of the founders of High Card Brewing.

Pugh opened High Card in 2019 right in the heart of Tucker's historic downtown. What makes the brewery unique is that it sits under the same roof as Blue Tarp Brewing. While High Card is in its first brick and mortar location, Blue Tarp had been operating in Decatur since 2012.

"I found this space but didn't need all of it. Tom [Stahl, owner of Blue Tarp] told me he was looking for new space as well so he came to look at it and we figured out how to make it work," Pugh explained.

One of the first things the bosses at High Card/Blue Tarp did upon opening was to get involved in the Tucker community. The breweries have hosted outings for non-profits like Friends of Tucker Parks, worked with school PTA groups and brought entertainment to Main Street with "Comedy and Beer", a first of its kind Valentine's Day stand-up show.

As for the future, Pugh has big plans for his brewing operation.

"We want to ramp up production and provide more to-go beer and eventually go into distribution," Pugh said.

High Card/Blue Tarp is located at 2316 Main Street, right behind Local 7. You can follow them on Twitter @HighCardBrewing and @BlueTarpBrew.



BUSINESS BOOM

by John McHenry, Community and Economic Development Director

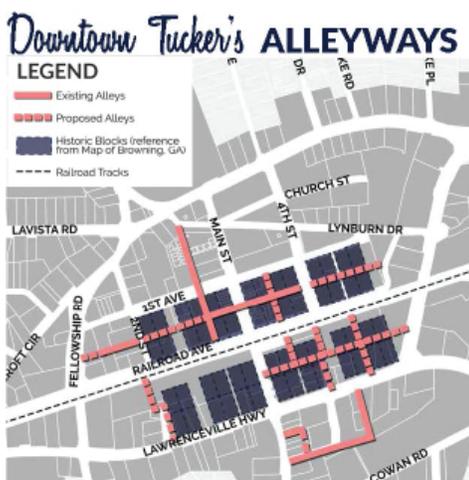


On Monday February 10 the City of Tucker voted unanimously to accept

the Downtown

Master Plan that was jointly sponsored by the City of Tucker and the Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District (CID). The consultant-driven effort was developed as an outgrowth of the City's first Comprehensive Plan, which detailed as one of the principal goals the enhancement of downtown Tucker. The plan lays out a vision and strategy for attracting quality development to Tucker's historic downtown core. The plan was able to take advantage of the new integrated zoning districts for the downtown that vastly simplified a complex array of zoning and design guidelines.

A key discovery of the plan was that the City would be able to reengage the original network of alleys that have been long ignored. By activating these alleys, the City can create new dynamic public spaces while creating further redevelopment opportunities. Connecting dead end streets and using alleys for pedestrian access



will encourage more of the community to patronize and enjoy the unique downtown.

"This was the right time to examine how we can best utilize the properties in the downtown," said Cofer Bros. CEO and key downtown landowner Chip Cofer. "I see where the consultants have identified potential redevelopment opportunities, as well as ideal locations for green space and needed parking."

The recommendations were developed through an extensive public outreach process with over 600 surveys and interviews with downtown property owners and businesses. The common themes heard were the need for increased walkability, more varied housing types, and greenspace with increased restaurants and shops. The study also identified that there was demand for retail, office and residential units in the downtown, as well defining a potential area for open containers.

Consultant Adam Williamson of TSW remarked on the depth of engagement from the citizens.

"This was a process in which we actively collaborated locally on a vision that will enhance the area," Williamson explained.

"We saw so many opportunities for redevelopment identified within the historic street grid. Along with the upcoming trail project, improvements to the alleys and added green space, downtown will be even more of a destination."

Rick Porter, a developer that focuses on downtown redevelopment projects was impressed.

"The plan captured that authentic existing character of downtown Tucker and integrated it into policies, programs and regulations that will allow the downtown to redevelop without losing that charm," added Rick Porter, a developer who focuses on downtown redevelopment projects.

Michael Vorndran, co-owner of the Corner Cup on Main Street, was also actively tracking this project.

"I'm very impressed that the City is proactive on the growth of the downtown," he said. "Now I want to see this plan implemented and more coffee drinkers in my store."

And that's a sentiment I think we can all raise a glass (or coffee cup) to!

Keep tabs on the Tucker business scene at tuckerga.gov/biz

GOING FOR GOLD

DIFFERENT KIDS, SAME MISSION FOR LIVSEY SCIENCE OLYMPIAD TEAM



Simone Kelly is a busy woman. In addition to leading the gifted program at Livsey Elementary School, she also moonlights as the school's theatre teacher. And the Academic Bowl advisor. And the Science Olympiad coordinator.

"Sometimes with Ms. Kelly I have to tell her 'no' to certain things," explains Livsey Principal Shawna Pickett. "We were looking for someone to help us with 4H and she was trying to volunteer, but she does theatre and she does [so much], so we have to rein her back sometimes."

This month, Kelly will be consumed just as she has been for each of the past 10 years; leading her students into battle at the DeKalb County Science Olympiad. Kelly's teams have advanced to the state

Science Olympiad competition in each of the past six years and she's aiming to make it seven in a row in 2020.

"Our goal at this point is to do well enough at county to again go to state," Kelly says before modestly adding, "we're going to try."

While the Science Olympiad competition is fierce, it's also fun for the students. Kids from more than 40 schools across DeKalb County come together each year to put their scientific caps on, applying critical thinking to a variety of competitions.

"Kids sometimes don't get a chance to excel in certain things in a classroom setting," Kelly explains, "but in a competition, you see them just light up at the opportunity to do that. Even when they don't do well, they start thinking, 'How can I do this better?' That's the kind of thinking we want them to have."

There are a handful of schools, like Livsey, that have a long history in the competition and enter as perennial favorites. But there are also a number of new schools getting their students involved. Last year, Tucker's Idlewood Elementary was one of those new kids on the block. They surpassed expectations by taking first place in their division in two events and third place in another.

"My daughter slept with her medal for a week," explained Roger Carter, a parent who helped organize Idlewood's first Science Olympiad entry.

Carter was not unique in his role, as parents and family members really drive schools' abilities to field Science Olympiad teams. At Livsey, Ms. Kelly got her students' families involved from the very start.

"I asked parents to be involved in the whole process," she recalls. "They have to coach alongside with me, and I help navigate scheduling, getting the resources, begging for resources. It's worked so well that we've gone to state and when parents come in I kind of preface it with, 'Look, we've gone to state this many times, so we want to keep that momentum as we continue.'"

If that momentum continues and Kelly achieves her goal of a seventh straight trip to the state competition, it won't be without sacrifice. States take place at Kennesaw State University each May on the exact same day at the exact same time as a beloved Tucker event.

"I have never been to Tucker Day," Kelly admits. By the same token, as long as she's heading up the Science Olympiad team, Kelly is glad to hold her own Tucker Day celebration...in Kennesaw.

TOP SCIENCE OLYMPIAD EVENTS

We asked students at Livsey about some of their favorite events at the Science Olympiad. Here's what they said:

WATER ROCKETS

Students design a rocket out of a two-liter bottle that is propelled through the air by water pressure. With a parachute attached to the nose of the rocket, they are judged on how long it stays in the air.

EGG DROP

Only using straws and tape, students are charged with building a receptacle to hold an egg as it is dropped from nine feet in the air. Successful teams complete the task with their egg intact.

PADDLE BOATS

Leading up to the competition day, students build a paddleboat out of popsicle sticks, rubber bands and glue. The goal is to see whose paddleboat can go the furthest in the shortest amount of time.



Livsey fifth graders show off their Water Rocket at the 2019 Science Olympiad competition.
(Credit: tuckerga.gov)

TUCKER CLUSTER

Updates & News

Important Dates

- **March 9** - Board of Education Meeting
- **March 13** - Teacher Workday/Professional Development Day

THE BRAG SHEET

Idlewood Elementary

- On February 28 Principal Elder hosted the Students of the Month for a special waffle treat and monthly glow stick party.
- Idlewood students will be participating in Read Across America the week of March 2-6.

Midvale Elementary

- The See Beautiful Club is accepting donations for its "Feed the Heart Food Drive". From now until March 19, they are asking for donations of bottled water, breakfast and granola bars, individually packaged chips and crackers, K cup pods, and other non-perishable food and drink items.
- Several of Midvale's fourth and fifth grade students participated in the Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl at Arabia Mountain High School on January 25. Out of all the teams competing, Midvale brought home a fifth place finish.

Smoke Rise Elementary

- For the third year in a row, the Dart Foundation awarded SRES with a \$3,600 STEM education grant. The grant will purchase one Lego EV3 Mindstorms Robot, its extension kit and one Lenovo Virtual Reality Kit. Students will be able to experience high quality educational visualizations in the form of virtual field trips.

Tucker Middle

- The TMS Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) club sent 22 students to its most recent competition. Twenty of those students performed well enough to advance to the Georgia FCCLA STAR competitions in March.
- The Tigers girls' basketball team won the 2020 DeKalb County School District Middle School championship 43-32 over Chamblee.

Tucker High

- The Tucker High School Vex Robotics team had an incredible showing at the State Robotics Championship with one team finishing as tournament champion and another as skills champion. They move on to the World Championship in April.

HISTORY COMES ALIVE IN THE CLASSROOM

Last February, the City of Tucker's Communications team worked with a handful of local residents to share their stories in a documentary for Black History Month. The result was the acclaimed *Four Streets: A History of the Peters Park Community*.

This year, in honor of Black History Month, the filmmakers along with one of the stars of the film, spoke with school and civic groups at special screenings of the movie. They answered questions about the film itself, as well as about life during segregation and what it was like to live in Tucker 60 years ago.

If you would like to learn about some of Tucker's untold history, subscribe to our YouTube channel and make sure to check out *Four Streets*.



Four Streets narrator Orin Romain (fourth from the right) joined the Stone Mountain Women's Club to discuss his role in the making of the documentary.



Peters Park resident and community activist Linda Clark spoke with a group of Social Studies students from Tucker High School about her efforts to improve the Peters Park community.

WILLIAM THOMAS

CITIZEN OF THE MONTH



“Will Thomas is an exceptional student and community member but more importantly he is an exceptional person. Rarely do you find a young person that is so willing to give their time and energy to make the world around them better.

While attending Tucker High School, Will is not only an integral part of the 2020 graduating STEM class, but he has also participated in many extracurricular activities and community service events. There are way too many events and accolades to mention, but as an example, Will is currently volunteering as the student representative for Tucker’s Complete Count Census Committee. He is giving up countless evenings to work with the committee to ensure everyone in Tucker knows and understands the importance of this year’s census and how important it is we all participate. His insight on how to inform young people about the process and the application of census data is invaluable.

Will is a ‘show up and get it done’ type guy. If you have enjoyed the pollinator garden, nature walk and cleaner water at Kelley Cofer Park, you have benefited from Will’s efforts. If you have driven by the high school and noticed the beautiful flowers and the greenhouse, Will had a hand in those as well. If you see Will, you can also wish him and his VEX Robotics team good luck at the World Championship taking place in Louisville, Kentucky at the end of April. His team is again one of the 17 teams representing Georgia in this prestigious event.

I am proud to nominate Will Thomas as Citizen of the Month.”

*Nomination by Julie Todd
Tucker High STEM teacher*

TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

KEN MILLER, BUILDING INSPECTOR

What was your background before becoming a Building Inspector?

My father was an electrical engineer and a builder/developer, so I grew up in the construction industry. My mother still has pictures of me, when I was one or two years old, sitting on a subfloor pounding on the floor with a hammer. By the time I was 10 I could shoot grade, run a track loader, backhoe and pan. I have two brothers, Bob and John, and before we were in high school we were cutting and grading roads, laying sewer, water and gas lines, and building houses.

You're a new resident to Tucker. Where did you come from?

I have two brothers and two sisters, and my wife swears we all came from different planets. As proof, she points to the fact that I do not have a birth certificate. Instead, I have a "Registration of Arrival" from Christ Hospital in Cincinnati. It says that upon arrival I was presented to Eva and Kenneth Miller, who are listed on my registration as "recipients of a male child."

But I believe you are interested in more recent history. For the last 20 years I have lived on the Gulf Coast of Florida, specifically Fort Myers.

How is building inspection different here in Georgia than it was in Florida?

Due to the frequency and severity of tropical storms and hurricanes in Florida, structures must be constructed to withstand a windspeed of 160 mph in the area where I lived. Nailing of roof and wall sheathing, tie-downs, strapping, windows, doors, roofing all must be inspected. Doors, windows, roofing materials and sheathing must be tested and receive a "Notice of Approval" (NOA) from the State of Florida. The inspector must verify that the installation of these products meets the intent of the code and were installed based on the requirements of the NOA. We don't have hurricanes in Georgia, although we can feel the impact, so I inspect to insure the structures meet the intent of the Building, Electrical, Mechanical, Gas and Plumbing codes. I want the structures to be sturdy, energy efficient and, most of all, safe.

Why is this job important to you?

Inspections provide an important service to the community. We all work hard for our money and a home is probably the largest investment most of us will make in our lifetime. When the time comes to buy or sell a home, look at the permit and inspection records; I know your insurance company will. A home that was properly permitted and inspected, including all additions and upgrades, is a better investment. The highest level of safety in the world is the result of the adoption and enforcement of the model building codes.



Off the Wall

What is the best concert you've ever attended?

My interest in music is eclectic. Being on the Green in Boston on the 4th of July and hearing the Boston Pops Orchestra perform the "1812 Overture" with cannons was amazing. Seeing James Taylor and Carol King together in concert, Kenny Rankin in a small club in Cleveland, Ohio, Earth, Wind and Fire at the Barbara B. Mann Performance Center, and Toby Keith in Chicago all bring back great memories. Maybe I've yet to attend the best concert.

Who is the most famous person you've ever met?

Astronaut/Senator John Glenn

What is your favorite sport?

College Football

Do you have a favorite inspirational quote?

President John F. Kennedy – "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

“ASK RIP”

Rip Robertson is the Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Tucker. He brings to the job years of experience in Parks and Rec, as well as Public Works.



Happy March, everyone! We've got so much going on at the Rec Center,

I hardly have space in this column to tell you about it all. Suffice to say, between wrapping up our inaugural youth basketball season and increasing class and activity offerings at Tucker Rec, my staff has been working really hard to make sure your recreation needs are being met. And coming up this month, we have one last hoops hurrah, as we're proud to be hosting the GRPA Class A 10 and under Boys State Basketball Championship at the Rec Center.

But as the weather is about to warm up, I want to let you know what's happening in our parks. Specifically, I want to answer a question that I have seen over and over on social media from two different sides of town. People near the Lawrenceville Highway/Montreal Road/I-285 area have seen construction just down the way from Johns Homestead. "What's going on?" they're asking.

Similarly, our friends in the Smoke Rise section of Tucker have noticed heavy machinery clearing space along the side of

Hugh Howell Road, right near Smoke Rise Park. They have been asking that same question, wondering what's happening.

If you'll remember, last year our Mayor and City Council approved funding for a small parking lot to be constructed at both Johns Homestead and Smoke Rise Park. This need was identified in our Parks Master Plan study. One of the aspects of that study was a look at how to help folks get more use out of the parks. For these two particular parks, the answer was simple: give people a place to park. There was no onsite parking and, while Smoke Rise Elementary and Rehoboth Baptist Church were great sports about letting parkgoers park cars in their lots, we couldn't continue to rely on that.

Your next question is probably, "Great! So, when can I park there?" I'm sure you're aware of how much rain we've gotten this winter. That can really set a construction project back. Fortunately, these parking lots are on schedule to be finished in May, just in time for summer hiking season.

So, as you pass those two parks and see the progress being made, understand that it's going to make these parks more accessible and increase use of these two great Tucker assets. It's just another example of the progress we're making in delivering you the best possible level of service in your city parks.



Crews worked around the February rains to clear space at Johns Homestead for a dedicated parking lot. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

Spring Break Camp!
APRIL 6 - 10
8AM - 2PM
 at Tucker Rec

\$75 per student

DAILY FIELD TRIPS!
REGISTRATION OPENS FEBRUARY 10

- Ages 5-12
- Maximum of 28 campers

Tucker Parks & Recreation

CONTACT US
 470-481-0205

Register in-person at Tucker Recreation Center
 4898 Lavista Road | Tucker, GA | 30084
 www.tuckerga.gov

TUCKER REC CENTER

2020 SUMMER MINI CAMP

MAY 26-29 & JULY 27-31
 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.

ONLY \$75 PER WEEK/CHILD

- AGES 5-12
- Limit of 56 campers per week
- Field trips
- Registration opens March 9th

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL **470-481-0205**

Tucker Parks & Rec

\$95 PER WEEK PER CHILD

AGES 5-12

KIDS SUMMER CAMP

8 WEEKS | JUNE 1 - JULY 24

MON-FRI 7 AM-6 PM

REGISTRATION OPENS MARCH 9

- Swimming each week
- HUD Vouchers accepted
- CAPS Approved (Provider # 94826)
- \$20 deposit required to hold spot each week

DAILY LUNCH & SNACK INCLUDED

Online Registration tuckerga.gov/parks

TUCKER REC CENTER
 4898 Lavista Road | Tucker, GA 30084 | 470-480-0205



TUCKER Community Corner



3/14 – Tucker Chili Cook-off **1 p.m., Main Street**

Join thousands on Tucker's Main Street for the ninth annual Tucker Chili Cook-off. Five dollars buys you a spoon for unlimited tastes and a vote for the People's Choice Award. Come early for the chili and stay late for the music.

3/17 – Tucker Cluster Council Meeting **6 p.m., 5036 Lavista Road**

The Tucker Cluster Council meetings are open to the public and provide a variety of information concerning our community schools. The March meeting will be at Tucker High School. Check for the agenda at www.tuckerclustercouncil.org.

3/22 – Tucker High School Foundation Golf Tournament **1 p.m., 1145 Stonewall Jackson Drive**

The third annual Tucker High School Foundation golf tournament held at Stone Mountain Golf Club raises money to support the teachers and students of Tucker High School.

3/24 – Candidate Forum for DeKalb County Sheriff **7 p.m., 4315 Church Street**

The Tucker Civic Association, in partnership with the Tucker Business Association, is hosting the eight candidates for DeKalb County Sheriff at the Tucker First United Methodist Church Activities Center.