

Soperton City Council presented with housing construction plan

By LOGAN REYNOLDS
Staff Reporter

Soperton may soon see a boost in new home construction if the city moves to annex property or grant the builder access to utilities.

Construction company Smith Douglas Homes presented a plan to construct several single family homes to the Soperton City Council during their July 20 regular meeting. The company has selected a 54 acre parcel of land in Treutlen County which the owner

agreed to subdivide 14.3 acres for the construction of approximately 67 lots for “50-foot single family homes,” according to Smith Douglas Homes representative Tom Bertha.

Under the proposed layout, each lot would take up 4.79 percent of the subdivided land with approximately 845.61179 square meters per lot. However, Smith Douglas Homes also intends to include streets and sidewalks in the proposed development, which would reduce lot sizes further.

According to Bertha, the smallest house plan would measure 877 square feet, which would sell for approximately \$150,000, and the company would also construct some of its larger 1,900 square feet and 149,000 square feet homes, which would all have to be sold under \$290,000 under grant requirements funding the project. Bertha pointed to similar projects in Thomaston and Americus as an example of what the company would do with the parcel.

According to Bertha, the proj-

ect would be funded by a \$2.5 million infrastructure grant from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ OneGeorgia Equity Fund. The grant serves as part of the department’s workforce housing initiative.

However, the parcel Smith Douglas Housing selected for the project does not have access to the city’s water and sewer system, as it is an unincorporated parcel in Treutlen County.

“The main issue, and the main reason we’re doing this [presenta-

tion], aside from just to keep it all up to date on where we’re at, is to discuss sewer and water access,” said Bertha.

For the project to move forward, Bertha presented the council with two options: Either grant the parcel water and sewer access in collaboration with Treutlen County, or fully annex the parcel into the city.

In addition, if the city decided to annex the parcel, the city would

SOPERTON COUNCIL
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Local fire departments respond to rapidly burning tractor trailer on Hwy 29

By LOGAN REYNOLDS
Staff Reporter

The Higgston Fire Department, with assistance from the Tarrytown Fire Department and the Montgomery County State Prison Fire Department responded to a vehicle fire on July 20 along Ga. 29.

According to Higgston’s assistant fire chief Chris McLendon, the fire department received a call at approximately 3:30 p.m. regarding a vehicle fire reported “in the area of Highway 29 and Ferguson Road.” A Dots Food tractor-trailer carrying a load of yogurt had caught fire, later determined by Higgston fire investigator Raymond MacDonald to be caused by accidental mechanical issues.

Firefighters responded to the fire within six to eight minutes, when they found the trailer “fully involved.” The fire had also spread to a patch of grass to the side of the truck.

According to McLendon, the truck’s driver managed to exit the vehicle before the cab became “completely engulfed in flames.” First responders reported no injuries at the scene.

“The driver escaped safely, no firefighters were injured and all emergency personnel returned home safely after the call,” said McLendon in a written statement.

Firefighters fought the fires on the truck and the grass for several minutes to bring it under control. The fire on the truck caused minor explosions during the process.

“Through the coordinated efforts of all responding agencies, both the tractor-trailer and the grass fire were quickly brought under control, preventing further spread and minimizing additional damage,” said McLendon.

Ga. 29 was temporarily closed for several hours while first responders fought the fire and cleared the scene, only reopening when the area was deemed safe for motorists.

“The Higgston Fire Department extends its appreciation to the Tarrytown Fire Department, Montgomery State Prison Fire Department, law enforcement, EMS and dispatch personnel for their professionalism and teamwork during the incident,” said McLendon. “Their rapid response and coordinated efforts resulted in a successful operation.”



The Higgston Fire Department, the Tarrytown Fire Department and the Montgomery County State Prison Fire Department responded to a burning tractor-trailer along Ga. 29 on July 20/LOGAN REYNOLDS

Periodical — Mail Label

Here's how local schools have been preparing for the new school year



Local students will return to school in August /LOGAN REYNOLDS

By LOGAN REYNOLDS
Staff Reporter

The 2026-2027 school year will begin at the end of July, and the local school systems have been preparing for the arrival of their students.

Some schools begin planning for the next school year around the beginning of the calendar year, while others concentrate their planning during the summer months.

“We start as soon as the students leave with the planning process of looking at viable data to inform our decisions for school improvement the next year, for class makeups, for teaching assignments, and then we develop those school goals, and those district goals,” said Montgomery County’s Superintendent Dr. Ronda Hightower.

The planning process allows school administrators to determine which strategies and policies to implement to uphold each school’s respective goals.

According to Superintendent Dr. Sarah Stone, the Treutlen County School System will have a focus on providing students with career experience through a variety of programs and pathways, as part of its goal to “engage, equip and inspire all for success in life.”

The Wheeler County School System established its five major goals in February as part of the adoption of its 2026 to 2031 strategic plan. Superintendent Dr. Alex Alvarez said the plan, along with several other of Wheeler’s accomplishments in the past year, has given the school something to build upon.

“Everything’s going to be very streamlined this year as far as all work we do has to tie back to that plan,” said Dr. Alvarez.

A major goal for Wheeler’s administration in service of those goals will be the creation of a unified literacy plan, part of the state of Georgia’s push for greater student literacy.

“The state is asking all school districts to create a unified literacy plan this year by January, so in the fall, we’ll be working with our community and parents and stakeholders to put together a good, unified literacy plan,” said Dr. Alvarez.

Another aspect of the state’s literacy push is the ban on cell phones in kindergarten to twelfth grade classrooms,

SCHOOL YEAR
Continued on page 6



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OBITUARIES



Maxine Frost Driggers

Funeral services for Mrs. Maxine Frost Driggers were held Friday, July 24, 2026 at 11 a.m. in the chapel of Higgs Funeral Home in Soperton. Burial was in the Red Bluff Baptist Church Cemetery in Treutlen County. Rev. Al Soles officiated. Mrs. Driggers died Sunday, July 19.

Mrs. Driggers, 90, was the daughter of the late George W. and Mollie Herndon Frost. She was born in Montgomery County on July 7, 1936 and had lived most of her life in Laurens County. She was preceded in death by her husband, Jimmy Driggers; two brothers, C.W. and Edward Frost and two sisters, Eulene Graham and Annette Branch.

Survivors include sons, Larry (Lucy) Driggers of Frisco, Texas, David Driggers of Willis, Texas and Terry (Janece) Driggers of Brazoria, Texas; daughter, Debra Fiori of Richmond, Texas; adopted daughter, Debbie Reid of Rockledge; also Billy and Debra Graham, Mitchell Graham, Willdean Garrett and son Chris, all of Rockledge; niece, Carol Cordry and several other nieces and nephews.

Pallbearers were Donald Warnock, Joey Etheridge, David Harrell, Mark Warnock, Lewis Foskey and Phillip White.

Higgs Funeral Home (higgsfuneralhomeandflorist.com and facebook) of Soperton had charge of arrangements.



Melanie Braddy Saliba

Funeral services for Mrs. Melanie Braddy Saliba were held Thursday, July 23, 2026 at 4 p.m. in the chapel of Higgs Funeral Home in Soperton. Burial was in the

Spivey Family Cemetery in Montgomery County. Rev. Chad Cofield officiated.

Mrs. Saliba, 82, passed away on July 17, 2026, leaving behind a lifetime of memories and the love of those who knew her. Born on June 29, 1944, Melanie was the daughter of the late Wilma Beaty Braddy and William Steelie Braddy. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Mose Saliba; her son, Jason Blaine Baker; her brothers, Billy Braddy and Bob Henry Braddy; and her sisters, Dana Braddy Herman, Marilyn Braddy Coker, Jeannine Braddy Evans and infant sister, Dale Braddy.

She is survived by her grandson, Webb Baker; her daughter-in-law, Patricia Baker; Jason's stepchildren, Alex and Julie Higginbottom; her sisters, Patty Braddy Barnhill, Sonja Braddy Spivey, Janis Braddy Talley; along with many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, great-great-nieces and great-great-nephews who will cherish her memory. She also leaves behind her faithful companion and beloved dog, Dylan, who brought her comfort and joy.

Melanie was a "Class of 1962" graduate of Treutlen High School and a graduate of Troy State University. She spent much of her adult life in Dothan, Alabama, where she built a career and a life she enjoyed. Following her retirement, she returned to Braddy family land, a place that always felt like home.

Those who knew Melanie knew she was intelligent, independent, and had a deep love for reading. She valued meaningful conversations, held strong convictions, and remained true to herself throughout her life. Melanie found joy in life's simple pleasures—a good book, a quiet afternoon on the porch, and the companionship of her beloved dog, Dylan. Melanie's life was marked by resilience, independence, and a love for home, family, and life's quiet moments. She will be remembered with love and missed always.

Higgs Funeral Home (higgsfuneralhomeandflorist.com and facebook) of Soperton had charge of arrangements.

First Monday continues to unite families and honor history in Ailey

By JADA LANE
Special to the Tri-County Connector

A cherished tradition that has brought generations of families together for more than a century will continue on Saturday, Aug. 1, as the annual First Monday Celebration returns to Ailey, Georgia.

The First Monday gathering is much more than a community event; it is a time of remembrance, fellowship, and family. Rooted in history, the tradition honors the life and legacy of Mr. Shelton Mincey, a respected Ailey native whose name was well known throughout Montgomery County and across South Georgia. Following his tragic passing in the late 1930s, family members and community leaders established this annual gathering to preserve his memory while strengthening the bonds that unite families, friends, and neighbors.

Today, the celebration continues to serve as a homecoming for descendants and longtime residents who return each year to reconnect, celebrate their heritage, and pass this treasured tradition on to future generations.

Throughout the weekend, visitors will enjoy family reunions, social gatherings, outdoor grilling, recreational sports, community vendors, and neighborhood block parties. These activities provide opportunities for families to share stories, build new memories, and celebrate the rich history of Ailey and the surrounding communities.

A meaningful part of the weekend is the community's commitment to preserving the historic Live Oak Cemetery, where many loved ones, including Mr. Mincey, are laid to rest. On Saturday, local churches and volunteers will gather to clean cemetery grounds and gravesites in preparation for the annual observance.

Sunday morning, families will worship together at the church of their choice, continuing a tradition of faith that has long been central to the First Monday celebration.

The observance concludes on Monday morning at Live Oak Church, where members of the church committee will welcome visitors with a meet-and-greet and complimentary cold lemonade and water. Families will spend time honoring their loved ones by placing fresh bouquets, removing weeds, cleaning headstones, and beautifying gravesites throughout the cemetery.

The weekend concludes with a community gathering where attendees share words of encouragement, reflect on the importance of preserving their heritage, and bid one another farewell until they reunite again next year.

For generations, First Monday has represented more than an annual event it is a living tradition that celebrates faith, family, fellowship, and the enduring legacy of those who came before us. As another year begins, the people of Ailey look forward to welcoming both longtime participants and first-time visitors to experience this meaningful celebration of history and community.

RELIGION DIGEST

Live Oak Baptist Church Cemetery Committee Annual Meeting

Dear family and friends, another year has passed, and we are rapidly approaching our Annual Cemetery Committee Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an update on the progress and accomplishments made during 2026, review any unfinished business from last year, and discuss new initiatives aimed at enhancing and preserving our beloved cemetery. The meeting will be Sunday, Aug. 2, at 3 p.m. The location will be Live Oak Baptist Church in Ailey, Georgia 30410. A food truck will be on site.

Georgia Farm Profitability Survey Deadline

The Georgia Foundation for Agriculture (GFA), Georgia Farm Bureau (GFB) and the University of Georgia College of Public Health, have partnered to launch the Georgia Farm Profitability Survey a statewide effort to measure the economic challenges facing Georgia farmers. The anonymous survey will be open to all Georgia farmers from July 1 through July 31. It takes about 10 minutes to complete. Visit <https://www.gafoundationag.org/ga-farm-profitability-survey> to take the survey.

The slow season

By ALBERT WHITE

And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we will reap, if we faint not. — Galatians 6:9

Most ministries have a time each year lasting a couple of months where we allow ourselves to rest. The time is necessary to allow our minds and our bodies to recover from the hard push of the revival season. I recently had a conversation with some people who had been involved in the real push of the revival season and after being in a camp meeting that was on fire for the presence of God and being engaged in the VBS and Youth Camp events with the children seeing large amounts of salvation.

I think that sometimes we who have done ministry for a long time expect the fluctuation in the feels of ministry, where some of the excited new births have never been that involved. The fast changes have caused some conversion to take place between some of the people that I know. When we are in the excited time of ministry we are charged most of the time, spiritually I'm saying. There is not much of a push to do your study and prayer which also encourages us to stay in the church. You're driven to it because of the feels of ministry. You feel close to the presence. To put it into more descriptive words you feel alive. It makes you want to do more and more ministry. Truth is, though overwork is overwork, no matter the value. It will burn you out. You will become tired and the exact feeling that you get from sitting down comes on you, but without explanation. When we slow down and the running slows to a crawl.

As the revival steps back to weekly services and the yelling spitting evangelist becomes the local pastor because he has slowed down too, we can begin to feel distant from that presence. The presence is not gone, it's different. Different because you are different. The drive to do stuff steps back and now you think about the next step rather than it always being ordered by someone else. Maintain your study and prayer. Keep going to church and keep working the ministry at home in the local church. Those souls are very important too. The great thing to remember is that the rest is a season. Enjoy the rest, take advantage of it to allow your flesh to be restored and your mind to gain new knowledge. The next revival run you will be more mature in your spiritual walk, the devils get stronger and the lessons get deeper, the help gets harder to provide. Truthfully, we need a slow season for preparation for the busy season. I am encouraging you to not get in your head with the devil creating imaginary conversation causing you to begin to question your walk, because that is exactly what he tries to do to us. My dad used to remind us, "whatever your hands find to do, do it with your might, as unto the Lord." Enjoy your rest season and prepare for the next push.

Albert White is the pastor of Blocker's Chapel Church on Thompson Pond Rd. in Vidalia, Ga.

PASTOR'S VIEWPOINT

By CHARLES "BUDDY" WHATLEY

Last week we talked about the critical questions of life; and there are three that come to mind. Who is Jesus? Who am I? And finally, what is God calling me to do? Last week John the Baptist knew the answers to all three questions.

Now what happens to a man who can't answer any of the three questions? His name is Herod Antipas, and now we have the makings of a story filled with politics, family rivalries, public reputations, and religious confrontations all wrapped up in a dramatic historical event leading up the the death of John the Baptist.

But the seed was planted by Herod the Great who was Herod Antipas' father and the ruler of Judea when Jesus was born. It was Herod the Great who ordered the murder of every male child under two years of age in and around Bethlehem. He knew the prophecies about the King of the Jews and wanted to kill any potential rival for his throne. And now his son Herod Antipas wants to stamp out any possibility of rebellion by the crowds who followed John the Baptist.

But there are actually two storylines in this passage of scripture: 1.) Herod Antipas is protecting his throne, and 2.) his wife Herodias is protecting her reputation. Herod Antipas divorced his first wife and married Herodias who had been married to his brother Philip. It all boils down to one verse in Mark 6.18, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." That one line from John the Baptist threatened Herod Antipas and embarrassed Herodias. John had to die!

Last week John the Baptist was a road sign; this week he's a mirror. And a mirror can be uncomfortable because it tells the truth. When we stand in front of it, it shows us what is there, not what we wish was there. God's Word, like John the Baptist, is a mirror. The intention is not to shame us, but to show us three things. We were created in God's image. That image was disfigured and distorted by sin. And finally, Jesus' death on the cross for our sins gives us a second chance, an opportunity to reclaim the image of God. And if I might be so bold, take the chance and reclaim the image!

Charles "Buddy" Whatley is a retired Methodist pastor serving the Dawson Street Methodist in Thomasville, Ga.



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DID YOU KNOW...?

Is a popular Australian phrase misremembered by many that use it?

By JACK BAGLEY
Georgia Trust For Local News

Did you ever have the feeling you were being watched? I have. I get it every week, right around the time you are reading this silly column. You're watching me, trying to figure out if what I'm saying is accurate and true ... and knowing that it is, since this isn't the first of April. I've gotten used to all the eyes of the world (or whatever portion thereof is reading this) upon me.

And if you like to write, you can contact me at didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com and I always answer, usually quickly! Now, on to the stuff you came to stare at!

Did you know...

... raw kidney beans can poison you? Raw kidney beans contain a chemical called phytohaem-agglutinin (no, I do not know how to pronounce it). This chemical can cause vomiting and headaches after just a small handful of raw beans have been ingested. Cooking the beans removes the chemical from them. (You won't even have time to learn how to pronounce it.)

... a popular breed of dog was bred to protect tax collectors? The Doberman pinscher was a breed developed in Germany in the 19th Century. They were bred to be guard dogs to protect tax collectors, who carried large sums of cash as they traveled through the countryside. They're very good with children and even with cats, as their fierce reputation is more public relations than actual fact. (They don't have to be scary if they look scary.)

... you are literally not the same person you were seven years ago? During a period of seven years, human beings replace every cell in their bodies. The cells you were made of seven years ago have been totally replaced. (And you never even noticed.)

... a popular Australian phrase is misremembered by most people? You may have heard the phrase, "I'll throw another shrimp on the barbie," spoken by Australian actor Paul Hogan (born 1939) in a series of tourism television commercials. Countless people working on an Australian accent quote the phrase ... but the thing is, Hogan never said it. What he did say was, "I'll slip an extra shrimp on the barbie for you." This is another example of the Mandela effect – remembering things as fact that didn't actually happen. (Never mind all that, I'd like my shrimp, please, Paul.)

... a park exists which is dedicated to snack treats? In the town of Collegedale, Tennessee, one can find the Little Debbie Park. This facility has play structures that are shaped like the snacks put out by the Little Debbie snack company – Nutty Buddy Bars, Oatmeal Creme Pies, etc. The land on which the park sits was donated by McKee Foods, owners of the Little Debbie snack brand. (Great place for dessert after the shrimp from the barbie!)

... an American general shut down a German general who complained about protocol at the end of World War II? On May 7, 1945, German Generaloberst Alfred Jodl (1890-1946), who had been sent by the German High Command to sign the surrender that would end the war in Europe, sneered because the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969), was not there. According to reports, Jodl growled, "Eisenhower didn't even bother to show up." That brought a reply from the Allied officer there to accept the surrender, General Walter Bedell Smith (1895-1961). Smith, known as "Beetle" to the Allied command, replied to Jodl, "General Eisenhower outranks you." Smith was correct: Eisenhower's rank as a five-star general was equivalent to the German grade of field marshal, one rank higher than Jodl at the end of the war. (Rank hath its privileges.)

... the first browser for the World Wide Web (what we now call the Internet) was created in 1990? Developed by Tim Berners-Lee (born 1955), the invention of the browser has led to his being credited as the man who invented the Internet. He didn't; he just invented a way for people like you and me to access it. (And I, for one, am very glad he did!)

Now... you know!

Thoughts on schoolwork and hoarding

Another summer, as far as the school calendar goes, is coming to an end. That means my home will soon be littered with textbooks, worksheets and various scraps of paper. It seems like only yesterday I was hauling a trunk load of recycling to the dump.

It does my heart good to throw things away, even if my children scribbled or doodled on it. That may sound a little hard-hearted, but if I kept every piece of parchment colored or written on by my offspring, I'd soon be overrun with litter. I'd be forced to traverse my home along treacherous pig trails between towers of loose paper. One wrong move or wayward sneeze would leave me buried alive beneath colorful depictions of cartoon characters and hastily calculated long division.

Teachers always want you to show your work, as if calculators don't exist and every cell phone didn't come pre-installed with one. To think of all the moments of my youth squandered, paper and pencil wasted trying to figure out math problems. But then again, how would my life have turned out if I was good with figures? I could be living the face-paced, sexy life of a corporate accountant.

My son has a good head for numbers, so much so that, to his teachers' disdain, he can do a lot of math in his head. He's like some kind of savant. I tried getting him into a casino one time with the ol' two kids in a trench coat trick, but apparently the security guard watched a lot of cartoons.

THE NEW SOUTHERN DAD



By KYLE DOMINY

But back to the accumulation of things ... I do keep a scrapbook of cherished drawings or written things for sentimental purposes, but the rest goes right into the trash. I don't want to end up on that TV show where psychiatrists and cleaning specialists mock help someone so the people at home can feel better about their cluttered homes.

Not too long ago, while helping my parents clean out their attic I came upon a hoard of schoolwork from my childhood. My mother seemingly was incapable of throwing out the things I now so easily toss into the wastebasket. She asked if I wanted to save any of it. You can guess the answer. In the end we did what should have been done decades before - got rid of a ton of paper. My knees hurt for

weeks after multiple trips up and down the stairs laden with boxes.

Similarly, my wife's parents saved a lot of her things in large containers that eventually made their way to my garage where they have sat undisturbed for years. I'm dying to haul these bulky, heavy boxes away, but I'm patiently waiting for permission. OK, maybe impatiently. I could just do it and hope it goes unnoticed. It's a victimless crime, and I'd have a corner of my garage back.

That's the problem with saving things. Precious memories from one moment become a chore down the road, or for someone else all together.

So this school year I'm going to do my kids, and future self a favor. I'm going to keep throwing things away.

NOW HERE'S A TIP

By JOANN DERSON
King Features

* When I needed a new tire for my truck because I ran over a nail, the shop guy suggested I purchase a slightly used tire that was closer to the age and wear of the others. I spent less

on the tire, and the tires will wear evenly.

* When baby's teething, try this trick from a grandma: Wet a washcloth and put it in a zip-top baggie in the freezer. When frozen, let the baby chew on it. Its texture and temperature are soothing to little gums, and

it can be rinsed and refrozen easily.

* Dusting shelves with lots of knickknacks can be a real chore. Try slipping a knee-high stocking over the hose of your vacuum wand. You can get very close to the items on the shelf without sucking anything up but

dust. If something did get sucked up, the stocking will catch it for you. This also works for toolboxes.

* Over-the-door shoe racks are perfect for holding a variety of cleaning products and small canisters of wipes. I even store batteries in various sizes there."

TRIVIA TEST

By FIFI RODRIGUEZ
King Features

- 1.) What is the goal space in the board game Candy Land?
- 2.) How many countries and territories border Spain?
- 3.) What are Captain Picard's two favorite catchphrases in "Star Trek: The Next Generation"?
- 4.) What is brioche?
- 5.) Which metal has the highest melting point?
- 6.) Who is credited as the author of "The Odyssey"?
- 7.) Which state is home to Acadia National Park?
- 8.) Who is the archenemy of the Fantastic Four?

Doctor Doom. 8.) The poet Homer. 7.) Maine. 6.) The bread. 5.) Tungsten. 4.) A rich French "Engage." 3.) "Make it so" and British territory of Gibraltar. 2.) Five – Portugal, France, Andorra, Morocco and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. 1.) King Kandy's Castle; Answers



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2026 Fall Semester registration is July 6 – August 11. Classes begin Aug. 17.
2026 Fall Minimester registration is August 19. Classes begin Oct. 12.

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PUBLIC NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Treutlen County and the City of Soperton are updating their Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan and invite all interested citizens to attend a public hearing and provide comments on the proposed plan.

The purpose of the hearing is to present the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update and receive public input regarding hazard mitigation strategies, goals, and actions designed to reduce the impacts of natural hazards on the citizens, property, infrastructure, and environment of Treutlen County and participating jurisdictions.

Date: August 4, 2026
Time: 10:00 A.M.
Location: Treutlen County Board of Commissioners Office
1830 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
Soperton, GA 30457

The public is encouraged to attend and participate. Comments received during the public hearing will be considered in the finalization of the Treutlen County Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

For questions or additional information regarding the plan update, please contact Emergency Management Director Justin McNure by email at justin.mcnure@treutlengov.us.

Osage Farms

RABUN GAP – This unincorporated community is a popular place for many reasons. One is that, while it can be blazing hot in the valley, it is pleasantly cool at higher elevations when you retire for the evening.

There are lakes where many residents in the state, particularly in Atlanta, retreat for extended stays in the summer and the warm weather months, these same spots renewing their widespread appeal when the leaves turn into autumnal splendor.

Fall is when trout fishing is something spectacular—exhilarating and one of the best outdoor experiences that one can enjoy in the great state of Georgia.

Rabun County was formed in 1819. The land lottery of 1820 saw land being sold for \$1.00 an acre, but there is a sad hangover for those times in that available land



LORAN SMITH

came when the Indians, primarily Creek and Cherokee, were banished to Oklahoma via the Trail of Tears.

It was the railroad and the building of lakes Burton, Rabun, and Seed that gave this area its greatest appeal and a boost to the economy. Farming has always been an economic staple of the past and still is today.

Although I haven’t done it lately, I have driven an hour and a half from my driveway in Athens to Osage Farms’s fruit and vegetable stand, located at 5030 U. S. Highway 441, for fresh vegetables that make my weekend.

This well-known produce haven is such a remarkable place where you find the best looking and the best tasting fruits and vegetables. Osage is best known for its strawberries, sweet corn, and heirloom tomatoes.

With a modicum of research, I learned that Osage is operated by 5th and 6th generation farmers Clint and Ricky James. I called for information and was fortunate to connect with Ricky’s wife, Melinda, who was very considerate of her time to answer questions from a farm-boy-turned-city-dweller who loves a vegetable plate as passionately as anyone.

When you are taking the farm’s best offerings at Osage, you have unlimited options – everything

from silver queen corn to beans to peas to butterbeans to peppers to spring onions to cabbage—to most anything you can think of.

In the fall when pumpkin season comes in, you can’t find a better pumpkin anywhere than at Osage’s. When there is nothing to harvest, and Christmas season is coming, that’s when Osage patrons can “choose and cut” your own Fraser fir for the holiday season.

The family history dates to early years on Scaly Mountain, which is 14 miles up into North Carolina. In 1972, the family started Osage’s, which has been a centerpiece of that stretch of Highway 441 from Clayton into North Carolina for decades. With their farming success, the family sells considerable produce to grocery chains Piggly Wiggly and Ingles.

Atlanta-based doctors, bankers, and businessmen and their families can’t wait to shop at Osage’s and then enjoy a vegetable dinner, which is a highlight of the

weekend.

The local folk make up the preponderance of their customer clientele, including local restaurants, but they have a link to local celebrities. Both sides of Gunner Stockton’s family come their way and so does Sharon Smart, the mother of a well-known college football coach in Athens. Nick Saban, former Alabama icon, has been known to stop by, along with former Georgia quarterback, Fran Tarkenton.

Doesn’t matter who you are, if you want to eat healthily and live longer, Osage’s farm-fresh produce will fulfill your wishes. This is their philosophy: “When it comes to your health, there is no comparison to freshly picked, high-quality vegetables. We take pride in providing the freshest produce to people throughout the Northeast Georgia area.”

If you do something well for 40 years, you should know what you are doing. That is certainly obvious with the Ricky James family.

Written words: We have yet another side of the literacy problem

The basic template for these weekly columns is that I try to identify a problem and offer solutions and/or roadblocks to achieving them. I also have a few usually unwritten rules and understandings of how politics works. High on that list is that the public will forgive almost anything but hypocrisy.

Combining those two sentences we arrive at a bit of a confession to start this week. I hate to read.

To be more specific, I hate to read books. Always have.

In elementary school I was a “good” reader. I really did think being in an advanced reading group in sixth grade would propel me to great things.

As children’s books turned to novels and dry textbooks, however, I looked elsewhere. I think I honed my sarcasm skills from magazines like Car & Driver and Motor Trend. By the time I was in high school I was a subscriber to Business Week, Newsweek, and Fortune.

I’ve always read to consume information. Twitter and other social media outlets have now become the way I am informed.

I hate the video formats. Give me printed words so that I can parse the meaning. I can go back and re-read as many times as necessary. There’s no need to rewind. No questioning if I heard things correctly or if the person misspoke or was clipped out of context.

Words – written words – are frozen in time. They have currency.

Well before I finished high school I determined I had better uses of my time than to read full books. I read the minimum necessary to complete assignments. I even found Cliff’s Notes tedious and unhelpful.

Many a paper was written on “theme” or “imagery” after first getting one of my older sisters to tell me the basic plot line and characters in an assigned book. It’s a good thing for me that they both loved to read and had an encyclopedic memo-

ry.

I was smart enough to mostly pull this off with acceptable grades. In reality, I was just outsmarting myself. I’m at least fortunate enough to have had some really great teachers who pushed me to at least understand the skill sets I was supposed to be building, even if I found some creative short cuts along the way.

All of that is a confession that I am part of today’s problem. We’re a country that is fast becoming one unable or unwilling to read.

“Literacy” is now a critical issue in states across the country. There is a truism in education, that a child learns to read until the third grade. After that point, the child must be able to read to learn.

The Covid shutdowns accelerated an already troublesome trend. Too many kids are passing third grade without basic literacy skills. The kids in early elementary school during the shutdown are now middle schoolers, and their performance is

proving the axiom.

We have a perhaps even bigger problem in our high schools and our colleges. Too many can no longer read long passages for comprehension. Inference is a skill that seems to be disappearing from standardized tests.

The SAT was revised a couple of years ago, and the reading passages in the verbal portion of the test saw huge changes. Instead of 500-750 word passages with multiple questions following, the test now provides 25-150 words with one question following.

The new format acknowledges the lack of attention span among high school students. It also limits the test’s ability to score for deep inferences.

Once in college, these same students, now well aware they are the “customer” – i.e., revenue source - on campuses, are flat refusing to read entire books assigned by their professors. Many profs are capitulating, and institutionalizing the short cuts I took in



CHARLIE HARPER
GEORGIA POLITICS

high school as a manner to teach the underlying material without burdening the students with reading.

Literacy gets a lot of attention as it should for early childhood education. We’re going to have to figure out the problems of “post-literacy” for adults who learned how to read words, but soon let these skills atrophy into a fully digital world.

I don’t yet have a solution, as to avoid my hypocrisy rule I have to instead admit I was a trailblazer for the problem. I have to first

fix it for myself.

I dug out a box and unpacked books this weekend. Many have moved house to house over the years without their spine ever being flexed. New friends have joined them from Amazon deliveries meant with good intention. A new one will arrive today.

The first four are on my coffee table and nightstand. The first chapters are completed. I learned a few things from the book, as well as that reading glasses are no longer a suggestion.

I hate going to the gym. I’ve done a workout every day for over seven years now because I realized letting muscles atrophy at this age doesn’t bode well for future me.

I’m not yet willing to commit to this same sort of dramatic change in reading, at least not yet. But I can’t very well encourage others to read if I don’t have something I’ve read recently to recommend, either. I won’t ask anyone to forgive that hypocrisy.

Putting God and this tiny little rock called Earth into perspective

Sometimes I start these conversations not knowing where they are going to end. This is one of those times. The subject today concerns current events, the universe and religion. Now, you can see why I don’t know where this is headed. Any one of the topics is complex enough in its own right without mixing them all together.

I think it began with the Artemis 2 lunar flyby of the far side of the moon last April, a total distance of about 695,000 miles and more than 230,000 miles from Earth. Staggering numbers almost beyond human comprehension.

That led me to a series called "How the Universe Works" that had originally aired on the Discovery Channel back in 2011. I found it on HBO Max last month. When you look at the size and scope of the universe, the Artemis 2 trek was like an inch to a million miles or more. This is a big and very complex universe. And this planet we call Earth amounts to one grain of sand on the beaches of St. Simons.

And that gets me to current events. As I write this, we are at war with Iran. Iran is at war with us and our allies. Israel is at war with Islamic terrorists. Russia and the Ukraine have been at war going on five years. There are civil wars in Sudan and Myanmar. Yemen and Haiti. According to data from the International Committee of the Red Cross, there are currently anywhere from 65 to 130 active armed conflicts globally. Peace on Earth? Forget about it. And we think that

Earth is all there is? Forget that, too.

Our planet, which we seem hellbent on destroying, resides in a solar system that includes the Sun, eight planets, five dwarf planets, hundreds of moons, and thousands of asteroids and comets. Our Solar System is located in a galaxy known as the Milky Way. In addition to the Solar System, the Milky Way is estimated to contain another 100 billion to 400 billion stars and at least that number of planets.

There’s more. Scientists think there are at least two trillion galaxies from what they have been able to observe and the feeling is that there are even more yet to be seen. Several trillion galaxies with each contain-



DICK YARBROUGH

ing hundreds of billions of stars? Maybe you can get your head around those numbers. I can’t. I can say that comparing our planet to a grain of sand on the beaches of St. Simons may be a gross understatement. What is not an understatement

is that we are one tiny insignificant rock in a universe vast beyond our comprehension. And that brings me to religion.

I believe in God. If anything, the more I learn about the vastness of the universe, the more convinced I am of God’s presence. It’s called faith. I have it and I don’t need to justify it to anyone. God is not a he or a she or an it, something we can define in human terms. In the Bible, God says, “I Am Who I Am.” That pretty much sums it up for me. God is God.

For all my life, I have thought of God only in terms of this Earth. Heaven and Hell. Adam and Eve. The Garden of Eden. Was that the work of God? Did God pick out Earth from all

the untold multi-trillions of planets to create a walking and talking man? (And woman.) Or did life on this Earth form some 3.5 billion years ago through abiogenesis, a process in which life was created from non-living matter, as scientists maintain, and then evolved into who and what we are today? The scientists interviewed on "How the Universe Works" surmised that there well could be other forms of life somewhere in our galaxy or beyond. They just haven’t found them yet. If so, did God put

them there? Or was God a one-planet God? If so, why us? A bunch of fractious people who can’t get along with each other?

I don’t know the answers, but I am anxious to explore the questions. A small group of us with diverse backgrounds, including clergy, are planning to meet regularly and talk about all of this. I am convinced God approves of the discussions and is not threatened by our musings. God is I Am Who I Am and that’s not going to change. We are the ones who need to change.



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DuBose Porter, Publisher Emeritus
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Kyle Dominy, Weekly Managing Editor
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tricoconnector@gmail.com

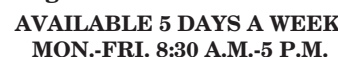
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SOPERTON COUNCIL

Continued from page 1

have to apply for the \$2.5 million grant, although Smith Douglas Homes would provide for the grant writing process. Otherwise, Treutlen County would apply for the grant.

“I kind of wanted to pick y’all’s brains and see would you rather have that parcel annexed in, or would y’all be willing to grant us sewer access and water access,” said Bertha.

Bertha said the parcel is immediately adjacent to the city limits, and the parcel owner is in favor of annexation. In addition, he also spoke with Treutlen County Manager Joseph Glenn about a potential annexation.

According to City Attorney Paul

Calhoun, these factors, along with the cooperation of Treutlen County, would make annexation a “relatively simple process.”

“It should be relatively easy as long as [the land owner] wants to go along with it, 100 percent annexation,” said Calhoun. “Where 100 percent of the people that own the land want to be annexed, and the city approves and the county doesn’t object, be very reasonable. The other is us passing a resolution, and that would take months, but given the fact it’s only one person, I don’t think the county’s going to object.”

Mayor John Koon agreed with annexation as the best course of action for the project, but was unwilling to commit to a decision due to a lack of specific information from

Bertha.

Commissioner Xandra Brown expressed concerns about affordability. According to Smith Douglas Representative Gary Thomas, the houses would be priced at approximately \$140,000 due to the grant funds.

“That price is affordable for someone – you could make \$40,000,” said Thomas. “So, if you have a credit score of like, maybe 620 plus, you could apply for a loan and qualify.”

Mayor Koon asked for information city engineers could review, and also asked to be notified of Bertha’s upcoming meeting with County Manager Glenn so he could attend.

Bertha also offered to send the council additional information after the meeting for review.

SCHOOL YEAR

Continued from page 1

signed into law by Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp on May 6. However, several schools enacted a cellphone ban prior to the law’s passage.

“I revisited that with the board last Monday, and our board was in favor of it, and feedback from our school administrators was that it’s been a positive thing as far as student engagement in the class, even just students socializing with peers at lunch and throughout the day,” said Dr. Alvarez.

Treutlen County is going a step further to reduce students’ overall screen time by including “personal electronic devices” and Bluetooth accessories in the ban policy.

“We want classrooms to be places where students are actively engaged with their teachers, collaborating with their classmates, and fully participating in learning,” said Dr. Stone in a written statement. “We believe these changes will improve student focus, increase academic achievement, strengthen communication skills, and encourage students to build meaningful relationships with one another.”

Another major change for Treutlen County is an earlier starting time for the school day, which now begins at 7:40 a.m. instead of 8 a.m. According to Dr. Stone, the change in starting time is intended to make “better use of valuable instructional time while creating a more efficient

schedule for our students.”

“An additional benefit of this change is an earlier dismissal,” said Dr. Stone. “After-school activities and athletic practices can begin sooner, allowing student-athletes to miss less instructional time when traveling for competitions. Families will also gain additional time together in the evenings, making this a positive change for both our students and our community.”

Montgomery County is also making major changes to its discipline matrix, meaning the structure of how school officials enforce disciplinary rules. According to Dr. Hightower, this revamp of the matrix is aimed at combating a rise in student misbehaviour in the state of Georgia.

“If you bring a vape, there will be consequences,” said Dr. Hightower. “If you disrupt the bus ride, there will be consequences. So, that is a big focus for us next year.”

Dr. Hightower also said the school has seen “less student misbehavior than most,” and Wheeler County schools saw a decline in student misbehavior as well.

Montgomery County will also see a strong focus on school security measures, which Dr. Hightower described as the schools’ “number one goal.”

“Our job is to make sure that we educate kids and prepare them for their future, not our past, but we can’t do that if first it’s not a safe environment,” said Dr. Hightower.

One of the schools’ new safety measures will be the introduction of new metal detectors which will also allow students to enter the school quickly. The school system will also see a number of other safety measures administrators cannot disclose.

“I’ve said this before and it’s worth saying again,” said Dr. Hightower. “I’ve never seen such tight and multiple layers of safety and security as I have seen in Montgomery County.”

Montgomery County will also provide the necessary school supplies for students, while Treutlen and Wheeler students will have to provide their own school supplies. Lists for the necessary items have been made available on the schools’ respective social media pages.

Each superintendent is looking forward to the beginning of the 2026-2027 school year and welcoming students both returning and new.

“The first day of school is always one of my favorite days of the year,” said Dr. Stone. “I look forward to welcoming our students and staff back to campus and seeing the excitement that comes with a fresh start.”

The Wheeler County School System will begin its school year on July 31. The Montgomery County School System and the Treutlen County School System will begin their school years on August 3.

Legals

Treutlen Co. Legals

S26-037

STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF TREUTLEN
IN RE: ESTATE OF WARREN LARRY CALHOUN, DECEASED.
All creditors of the estate of Warren Larry Calhoun, deceased, late of Treutlen County, are hereby notified to render their demands to Richard M. McNeely, attorney for Jessica Calhoun Parrish, Administrator of the Warren Larry Calhoun Estate, at P. O. Box 767, Swainsboro, Georgia 30401, according to law, and all persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment of any indebtedness due the estate.
This 14th day of July, 2026.
RICHARD M. MCNEELY,
Attorney for Jessica Calhoun Parrish, Administrator of the Warren Larry Calhoun Estate
Richard M. McNeely, P.C.
P. O. Box 767
Swainsboro, Georgia 30401
(478) 237-4225
July 23, 30, August 6, 13, 2026

S26-038

ABANDONED MOTOR VEHICLE
GA CODE# 40-11-2:
You are hereby, in accordance with OCGA 40-11-19 (A) 2, that petitions were filed in the Magistrate Court of Dougherty County to foreclose liens for all amounts owed. If the lien is foreclosed, a court shall order the sale of the vehicle to satisfy the debt. The vehicle is currently located at: A&W Towing, 551 Truckers Trail, Soperton, GA 30457. Anyone with an ownership interest in this vehicle should contact the business above.

TT360

2008 CHEVY IMPALA SILVER
SERIAL#2G1WB58K381291349 TAG#S-BW-9356 Picked Up at HWY 199/MERCER CREEK RD

TT362

2009 FORD F150 BLACK
SERIAL#1FTPW12V09FB33878 TAG#C-TA-2748 Picked Up at RED BLUFF CH RD

TT363

2003 FORD F150 SILVER
SERIAL# 1FTRX18W43NA38176 TAG#NO TAG Picked Up at I-16 E MM 80

TT365

2015 CHEVY SILVERADO WHITE/RED SERIAL#3GCUKRECOFG215854 TAG#AWY-44C PICKED UP AT COUNTY JAIL

TT367

2010 NISSAN ALTIMA GREY
SERIAL# 1N4AL2AP5AN527044 TAG#S-DC-9308 Picked Up at HWY 46/199

TT368

2013 DODGE CHARGER GREY SERIAL#2C3CDXBG1DH620186 TAG#NO TAG Picked Up AT HWY 46/199

TT369

2004 CHEVY TRAILBLAZER BLACK SERIAL#1GNES16S446170824 TAG#NO TAG Picked Up at COUNTY JAIL

TT370

2014 NISSAN SENTRA BLUE
SERIAL#3N1AB7AP3EL679472 TAG#PNH-8264
PICKED UP AT HWY 29

TT371

2006 NISSAN ALTIMA SILVER

SERIAL#1N4AL11D96C181955
TAG#SBD-1687 PICKED UP AT SECOND ST

TT373

2003 LEXUS ES 300 MAROON
SERIAL#JTHBF30G530131434
TAG#TFS-9885
PICKED UP AT I-16 W MM 82

ALL VEHICLES ARE NOW LOCATED:
A & W TOWING LLC
551 TRUCKERS TRAIL SOPERTON, GA 30457

July 30, August 6, 2026

Wheeler Co. Legals

WC26-001

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF
WHEELER COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA
IN RE: ESTATE OF BETH ANN ADAWAY, DECEASED
ESTATE NO. 2026-P-13
NOTICE

IN RE: The Petition to Probate Will (and Codicil(s)) in Solemn Form in the above-referenced estate having been duly filed. TO: ALL UNKNOWN HEIRS OF BETH ANN ADAWAY

This is to notify you to file objection, if there is any, to the petition to probate will in solemn form, in this Court on or before September 8, 2026.

BE NOTIFIED FURTHER: All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact probate court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be held on September 8, 2026. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.
Judge of the Probate Court
Clerk of the Probate Court
16 Pearl Street #103
Alamo, GA 30411
Address
(912) 568-7133
July 16, 23, 30, August 6, 2026



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Survey seeks input from Georgia Farmers on economic challenges

By JENNIFER WHITTAKER
Georgia Farm Bureau News

MACON – Today, the Georgia Foundation for Agriculture (GFA), Georgia Farm Bureau (GFB), and the University of Georgia College of Public Health, have partnered to launch the Georgia Farm Profitability Survey a statewide effort to measure the economic challenges facing Georgia farmers.

The survey is designed to collect Georgia-specific data directly from farmers to better understand the factors affecting profitability and identify opportunities to strengthen agriculture statewide. Findings will help inform future communications, grassroots engagement, and policy discussions while providing credible, research-backed data to support advocacy efforts on behalf of Georgia agriculture.

"We know Georgia farmers are facing significant challenges, and we want to hear directly from them," said Georgia Farm Bureau President Tom McCall. "This survey will help us better understand the issues affecting profitability so we can focus our efforts where they will make the greatest impact for Georgia’s farm families."

The anonymous survey will be open to all Georgia farmers from July 1 through July 31. It takes about 10 minutes to complete. Visit <https://www.gafoundationag.org/ga-farm-profitability-survey> to take the survey.

The project is funded by the GFA. Research oversight and analysis are being led collaboratively by Dr. Christina Proctor, researcher with the University of Georgia College of Public Health, and Dr. Stephanie Basey, founder of The Hive Research Collective and a research consultant working with the GFA. GFB is coordinating statewide promotion and survey distribution with support from agricultural industry partners to encourage participation from farmers across Georgia.

Following the survey period, the data will be analyzed. GFA and GFB will develop a report highlighting key results, which will help inform future agricultural initiatives, communication efforts, and advocacy priorities, including the ongoing Strong Farms Strong Georgia campaign. Visit www.gfb.org/strong-farms-strong-georgia-initiative to learn more about the campaign and to access resources farmers and agribusiness-

es can use to educate consumers.

Each year the GFB Board of Directors identifies priority issues affecting Georgia agriculture for the organization to focus its advocacy efforts on. As farm economics continued to worsen in 2025, the GFB Board identified the sustainability of the family farm as the organization's top priority for 2026. Farm profitability has decreased in recent years as producers navigate rising production costs, fluctuating commodity markets, labor challenges, weather-related losses and other economic pressures.

Georgia farmers are encouraged to participate to ensure the survey reflects the experiences and perspectives of agriculture across the state. For questions about the survey, please contact info@gafoundationag.org.

About The Georgia Foundation For Agriculture: The Georgia Foundation for Agriculture is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to preparing the next generation of leaders for success in Georgia agriculture. The GFA works with Georgia Farm Bureau and other Georgia agricultural and educational organizations to achieve its mission. The foundation offers scholarships to students pursuing agricultural careers, funds leadership development programs and projects that increase the public’s understanding of agriculture. To make a tax-deductible donation, learn more about the foundation or the scholarships, visit www.gafoundationag.org.

About Georgia Farm Bureau: The Georgia Farm Bureau Federation is the state’s largest general farm organization with 158-chapter offices that cover all of Georgia’s 159 counties. As a membership-driven, nongovernmental organization, GFB serves as the voice of Georgia farmers and rural Georgia by advocating for them on legislative issues and promoting Georgia commodities.

GFB membership is open to the public and offers a wide variety of benefits, including insurance and discounts for health services, travel and family entertainment. Enrollment in any of the member benefits is optional and not a requirement for membership. For more information about agriculture please visit www.gfb.org, like Georgia Farm Bureau on Facebook or follow GFB on Twitter.

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