

TRI-COUNTY CONNECTOR

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Alamo City Council revisit possible police department closure

By LOGAN REYNOLDS
Staff Reporter

The Alamo City Council revisited the topic of potentially closing its local police department during its monthly meeting on Nov. 16 in the Alamo City Hall.

The topic was brought forward by Mayor Pro-Tem Geoffery Villegas, as the council had previously agreed to table the issue until after Oct. 31, 2026, due to an ongoing grant agreement at the time.

"I remember we voted to revisit the police department situation at the end of October, and I just wanted to see what we had going on here, talk about it and see what everybody's thoughts [were]," said Villegas.

Discussions regarding the potential closure of the Alamo Police Department began a year prior in November 2025. During that meeting, the discussion regarding the police department was not originally on the meeting's agenda, but was added at the beginning of the meeting at Council Member Steve Jones' request.

He argued that while the council had put off the decision regarding the police department in favor of receiving residents' input, recent elections showed low engagement with the council's actions.

"What I'm saying is they are not interested in what we're doing," said Jones at the time. "We need to do what we need to do for the city of Alamo, saving money if we can. We can use it somewhere else, and I just think we need to move on with it, start the process."

Council Member Dondrea Geter argued against Jones' proposal, calling the move "tasteless" and "classless." Jones offered a motion to begin the process, which passed 3-2.

For the following December 2025 meeting, city officials and the Wheeler County Sheriff's Office both prepared documents regarding the Alamo Police Department's financial costs and the projected savings from a merger, respectively. Both documents were made available to attendees to review.

The new department under the sheriff would look to staff four deputies, which would provide up to three deputies per shift "ensuring reliable 24/7 coverage for the city" according to the proposal. Council Member Patricia Woodard asked Sheriff Glenn Giles during the meeting if the department could instead staff two deputies, but Giles insisted four deputies would be the target for proper coverage.

The City of Alamo also offered to transfer equipment over to the sheriff's office for the merger, but the city would not receive a discount in the first year for it. According to the proposal, "granting a discount in year one would undermine the sheriff's office's ability to properly staff, equip and

ALAMO POLICE
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Soperton Police Chief Brian Scott speaks to the local city council on Nov. 16 in the Soperton City Hall regarding the purchase of new LTE radios and an intergovernmental agreement with the Treutlen County Sheriff's Department/ LOGAN REYNOLDS

Soperton City Council approves purchase of improved police radios

By LOGAN REYNOLDDS
Staff Reporter

The Soperton City Council approved the purchase of Long-Term Evolution (LTE) radios for the Soperton Police Department and Public Works Division during its monthly meeting on Nov. 16.

According to Soperton Police Chief Brian Scott, the proposed radios operate via LTE wireless broadband, rather than traditional radios' reliance on radio towers.

The new radios would maintain the same radio channels as the older radios, while also allowing for communication between other communities to request mutual aid, including Laurens County and Emmanuel County.

"This is not going to replace our current radios," said Scott. "This is going to supplement them."

RADIO
Continued on page 6



Coca-Cola officials stand behind hard hats during a groundbreaking celebration for the new Dublin Coca-Cola Bottling company, 128 Innovation Way/RODNEY MANLEY

Coca-Cola returns to Dublin bringing 60 jobs in a $20 million capital investment

By PAYTON TOWNS III
GTLN

Coca-Cola is coming back to Dublin, Georgia.

A groundbreaking was held last week morning for the Coca-Cola news sales and distribution center, which will be located on 128 Innovation Way.

Coca-Cola officials and leaders from the city of Dublin and Laurens County used shovels to dig in dirt and shovel it following a short celebration. The new building will be a capital investment of $20 million, for a facility the size of approximately 33,000 square feet on roughly 10 acres. The office space was listed as 6,500 square feet for 60 associates.

The warehouse and support will be 18,500 square feet while the loading area will be 8,000 square feet.

COCA-COLA
Continued on page 2

Periodical — Mail Label

Soperton resident heads holiday event organization efforts

By LOGAN REYNOLDS
Staff Reporter

The city of Soperton will see a number of community events within the next year, beginning with the "Christmas in the Pines" on Nov. 28.

The initiative is spearheaded by Misty Lee Brantley, a member of the local community service board who previously served as a marketing coordinator for Easterseals Disabilities and Community Services. During her time with Easterseals, she organized several events, including five kilometer runs, golf tournaments and a rodeo. She also operates the rodeo company Shields and Spurs Pro Rodeo.

"I have a lot of background in doing events, and coordinating things and putting things together," said Brantley.

This background led her to organizing events alongside the city of Soperton in a "volun-told" position. Brantley and her husband, Clint Brantley, restarted the city's annual Christmas tree lighting event in 2014, and have been asked to return to the event after some time away to "make it big again and make it epic."

Soperton's tree lighting ceremony "Christmas in the Pines" will be held on Nov. 28 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Soperton town square. The event will feature musical performances from the Treutlen County High School Marching Band and a guest performer, Christmas carols, a Christmas message and a Santa Claus performer, before the city's Christmas tree is lit for the first time.

"Chirstmas in the Pines" is only the first in a number of planned events for the Soperton community. Brantley's goal in organizing these events is to utilize more of Soperton's public spaces each quarter of the year while also encouraging residents to spend more time in the city, as opposed to leaving to find activities in other communities.

"With us being such a small community, it's important that you see each others' smiling faces and support each other, and support our local businesses," said Brantley.

Brantley's suggestions for future events under this initiative include fall festivals in Jean Gillis Memorial Park, Easter egg hunts and public showings of movies in local parks, among others. She aims to schedule these events quarterly.

"There's so many things we can do, so each quarter we plan on doing something," said Brantley.

She also spoke to the Soperton City Council during their meeting on Nov. 16 regarding her plans to hold events for residents of all ages. The mayor and council members expressed their support for Brantley's efforts.

"So, we have several things that people are getting excited [for], and they want to see Soperton grow and not have to go to Vidalia, or Lyons or Dublin when we can do it here," said Brantley when speaking to the council. "We have the ability to do it here."

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OBITUARIES



Vada Jewell Peavy Purvis Horne

Vada Jewell Peavy Purvis Horne, lovingly known as Mama Jewell, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2026, in Savannah, Georgia. She was born on Oct. 17, 1941, in McRae, Georgia.

Mama Jewell will be remembered with love by her family and all who knew her. She is survived by her daughters, Cindy Vaughn (Sammy) of McRae, Lisa Yawn (Jimmy Cole) of Alamo and Nancy Purvis of Alamo; her son, Alan Purvis of Alamo; and her brothers, Eric Peavy (Jule) of Michigan and Larry Peavy (Lori) of Cocoa Beach, Florida.

Her memory also lives on in her grandchildren, Dawn Mitchell (Alan), Krystal Mimbs (Steele), Julia Elizabeth Wiggins (Jae), Dustin Clements (CJ), Jordan Vaughn (Anjli), Jennifer Bridges (Stephen), Lorin Bledsoe (David), Logan Purvis, Jeremiah Purvis and Abby Clarke (James). She was further blessed with great-grandchildren Noah Mitchell (Izzy), Aidan Mitchell, Samuel Abernathy, Katharine Abernathy, Aden Jones, Dixie Jones, Anya Mimbs, Lylia Mimbs, Isabelle Purvis and Raelynn Purvis; and great great-grandson Avery Mitchell. The love she shared with her family will remain a lasting part of their lives.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Vada Irvin Peavy; her father, Nelson Avant Peavy; her husbands, Ray Purvis and Bobby Horne; her granddaughter, Lacey Amber Clements; her brothers, Ken Peavy and Monroe "Bunk" Peavy; and her sisters, Bunny White and Judy Friend.

A funeral service was held at 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 14, at Community Church of God, Helena with burial at Alamo Memorial Cemetery.

Mama Jewell's life is cherished in the hearts of her family, and her memory will continue to be carried forward by the many generations who loved her.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Community Church of God, 103 Community Church Road, Helena, GA 31037, or to the church or charity of your choice.

Online condolences may be expressed at vaughnfh.com.

Vaughn Funeral Home of McRae was entrusted with arrangements.

COCA-COLA

Continued from page 1

Victor Ragland, vice president for the East region, said this new plant will serve 10 counties.

"This is especially meaningful to me to share this occasion with our associates and our customers, community partners and local leaders," said Fernandez Jordan, sales center manager, said. "We are proud to be a part of the Dublin community and excited to celebrate the next chapter."

Jordan thanked the local leaders and partners for this project. That support was instrumental to the groundbreaking Tuesday.

"I am proud to celebrate this milestone with you," Jordan said.

Ragland was glad to have people from the community gather to celebrate Coca-Cola United Dublin. He was proud to announce the $20 million investment.

"This investment reflects our confidence in Dublin and our long-term commitment to the state of Georgia," Ragland said. "To my associates, this new facility represents an investment and the resources they need to succeed. To our customers, this will strengthen our ability to provide dependable service that they deserve from us every day."

Construction is anticipated to be completed by October of 2027.

"We are so grateful to the local leaders and the community partners that have made this possible," Ragland said. "We look forward to building on the relationship that we help take Dublin to the next phase."

Dublin Mayor Joshua Kight thanked Coca-Cola for returning to the city. He reminded the crowd that the company has had a long history for the Dublin, Laurens County community when it had a bottling facility on East Jackson Street. Years ago, they moved out of that facility, and gave its old building to the city of Dublin who uses it for its gas department.

"Coca-Cola always brings their products to our city events," Kight said. "Coca-Cola wanted to contribute and that has happened multiple times, over and over again. This has happened multiple times. This is exactly the kind of quality growth we want. Coca-Cola is a tremendous partner in making this community strong."



Coca-Cola officials and Dublin, Laurens County officials shovel dirt during the groundbreaking ceremony for the new bottling plant/RODNEY MANLEY

Laurens County Commissioner Gerad Mathis was saddened when Coca-Cola left last time. He was glad they were returning.

"Coca-Cola has always been an amazing company to me," Mathis said. "There is not a gas station in America, or maybe other countries, where you won't see a Coca-Cola product. Very rarely can you go somewhere and not see Coca-Cola. We appreciate Coca-Cola and we appreciate you coming back to Dublin."

Roger Folsom, with the Dublin-Laurens Development Authority, was also glad Coca-Cola returned.

"We appreciate their investment and a chance to employ our own citizens," Folsom said. "It has been a great pleasure to work alongside this Coca-Cola team in this project. We appreciate the team who worked on this alongside Coca-Cola and we look forward to future growth.

"The relationship between Coca-Cola, the Dublin-Laurens Development Authority and the Dublin, Laurens County community, is like the old Coca-Cola slogan, "It's the real thing," he added.

Representative Matt Hatchett was the final local speaker to address the crowd. He said the previous speakers had "stolen all of my words."

"That read my speech," Hatchett said. "When you think of Georgia globally, you think of Coca-Cola. They are a staple of our state."

Hatchett recalled when Coca-Cola met with him years ago to say they were going to leave Dublin, he was not happy.

"But we moved on," he said. "This year, they asked to have another meeting with him. When they told me they were coming back to Dublin, it was a great day and I am thankful that y'all are coming back. We can't express how grateful we are to be riding down that road and we'll be able to see that bright red Coca-Cola emblem in the city and county again."

Jordan ended the event by leading everyone with holding up a Coca-Cola bottle for a toast.

"Thank you for being a part of Coca-Cola United," he said.

PASTOR'S VIEWPOINT

By CHARLES "BUDDY" WHATLEY

The teachers in our midst can tell you there are two kinds of students: there are some who come to learn and there are others who already know it all. The first group brings their questions; the second group brings their answers. Those same two groups come to church and sometimes they're standing in our pulpits. A few of them are bishops and district superintendents and other religious leaders.

Jesus was and is looking for people with questions who want to learn, but the Pharisees and Sadducees came with all the answers. It is the Semmelweiss Syndrome, "Don't confuse me with the facts, I've already made up my mind!" In the 1700's, before people knew about germs, Dr. Ignaz Semmelweiss wanted doctors to wash their hands after doing an autopsy and before they examined pregnant women in a hospital. They refused and 80% of the pregnant women continued to die. Dr. Semmelweiss lost his mind and died in an insane asylum.

Our Scripture for today is from Matthew 12:9-14 GNT, "Jesus left that place (where the disciples ate the grain on the Sabbath) and went to a synagogue, where there was a man who had a paralyzed hand."

It all started with a plan to protect the Sabbath, but over time the plan to protect the Sabbath became more important than the purpose of the Sabbath. Simple daily activities like lighting a fire, cooking, harvesting, carrying burdens between private and public spaces, and tying or untying knots were forbidden.

"Then he (Jesus) said to the man with the paralyzed hand, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and it became well again, just like the other one. Then the Pharisees left and made plans to kill Jesus."

There's one detail in this story that many people miss; Jesus didn't simply heal the man's hand. He asked the man to "stretch out your hand" which is the one thing the man couldn't do. But he tried and when he tried to "stretch out your hand," he could! We call it a "step of faith." I tell people all the time, Christian healing is not magic, it's a miracle! Jesus heals us, but we have to "take a step of faith" to receive it.

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

Season of thanksgiving

By ALBERT WHITE

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Matthew 25:37-40

When we get the chance to bless someone or simply do a kind deed that another person benefits from, to think that God is glorified so much in that gesture that we would receive it as if it happened to ourselves. That is amazing to me.

I have had the chance to be present many times throughout our ministry when someone received some sort of breakthrough blessing and I must say the feeling that is there in those moments is addictive. The feeling you get from blessing someone in a big way is different than any other feeling. Their gratitude makes you want to give even more things away.

I was thinking about the fact that Thanksgiving season is upon us. I must say, I love this season. To me there is an essence in the air that is not at any other time of the year. Maybe it's because people everywhere are counting their blessings from the Lord. I don't know really. Maybe I love the season so much that I fabricate an emotion that is not real. Either way, I love it! I had this thought of what thankfulness looks like and yes, I know that thought is one that is pretty fluid.

I have seen people cry for joy to express their gratitude. I have heard them laugh out loud with uncontrolled laughter because of joy. I have seen people fall on someone's neck and hug them strongly for a blessing that was very much needed.

People show appreciation in so many ways that we could never capture them all in our finite views. This one thing that I am sure of though, at least I believe it very strongly. That one thing is, Our God loves it when we are nice to one another. He takes it personal and he blesses us in return and it's he who arranged for us to bless someone from the beginning.

I had an opportunity to talk with a young lady several years ago who served with a different church but with the same mission group that our young people did in the Appalachian Mountains. A little girl was stricken in such great poverty that she found a toy doll with no head in a dumpster and to her it was great. The doll was her only one and she was grateful for it. This young lady that I know told that story with tears in her eyes and with a broken heart for that little girl. She began to put some dolls in a box to take to that little girl. She would have been beside herself to receive those dolls. But the girl I knew was excited to be able to give them to her.

Reading these verses God was excited for the child to get them too. She did it for a little girl. God took it personally. I encourage you to bless someone with something that you know they need. It could be groceries or anything. See for yourself what grateful to give feels like and what grateful to receive looks like, Our god who is faithful to cause you to reap what you sow will reward your good gesture with his own toward you.

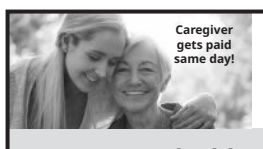
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CITY OF SOPERTON
PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
ADOPTION NOTICE
PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGETS
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027

A copy of the proposed operating budgets will be available for public review at Soperton City Hall between the hours of 8:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for holidays and weekends, December l, 2026 December 31, 2026.

First Public Hearing
Thursday, December 10, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.
City of Soperton, Council Chambers, 1973 MLK, JR. DR

The purpose of the meeting is to receive public comments on the proposed City of Soperton Municipal Operating budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

Budget Adoption
Monday, December 21, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.
City of Soperton, Council Chambers, 1973 MLK, JR. DR

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact City Hall at 912-529-6713.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Was the voice of a beloved Disney animated character provided by a U.S. Marine Corps Drill Instructor?

By JACK BAGLEY
GTLN

Today is Thanksgiving.

Well, today is actually Thursday as listed on the front page, but knowing the newspaper business as I do, I also know you probably are getting your newspaper the day after Thanksgiving.

So how was the meal? I hope you had a very happy time with family and friends and lots of love and great food.

May I offer some dessert? This trivia is great, and very low in calories, too. Enjoy!

Did you know ...

... you can tell if a Nazi eagle is political or governmental by looking at it? Most people assume that the *Reichsadler*, the "national eagle" of Nazi Germany, was the same everywhere. It wasn't. If the eagle clutching the swastika was looking over its right shoulder, it was a governmental emblem. However, if the eagle is looking over its left shoulder, it was symbolic of the Nazi party. (Nowadays, the Nazi eagle looks ... dead.)

... plastic grocery bags were originally meant to be used repeatedly? Created by Sten Gustaf Thulin (1914-2006), a Swedish engineer, they were meant to be a reusable, eco-friendly alternative to paper grocery bags. Thulin felt that the production of the paper bags contributed to deforestation. However, our "throwaway" society has basically reduced the bags to one-use, just like the paper bags had been. (The best-laid plans of mice and men ...)

... how much the most expensive edible fungus in the world costs? Known as *Tuber magnatum pico*, the pungent white truffle can sell for as much as $3,000 per kilogram. (For that price, they can come up with a better name than "pungent white truffle." I'm just saying.)

... the voice of a beloved Disney animated character belonged to a decorated Marine drill instructor? The 1942 classic animated film *Bambi* featured the voice of Donnie Dunagan (1934-2026) as the title character. Dunagan was a child actor who had played the *son of Baron Frankenstein* in 1939's Son of Frankenstein. When he turned 18, Dunagan joined the U.S. Marine Corps and, after serving as the youngest drill instructor in the history of the Corps, he rose to the rank of major and earned the Bronze Star and Purple Heart in Vietnam. No one in the Corps knew that he had been the voice of the beloved movie character. *Additional trivia note:* Dunagan came out of an 80-year retirement from movies for a role in the 2026 film *Sub Rosa*. (Imagine Bambi calling you to attention. Just imagine it.)

... a river in Minnesota was at one time believed to drain into nothingness? Minnesota's Judge C.R. Magney State Park, located near Lake Superior, has within it the Brule River, half the water of which flows into the lake and the other half tumbles over Devil's Kettle Falls ... and apparently vanishes. For decades, scientists tried to figure out where the water went, using everything from ping pong balls to GPS trackers. Finally, in 2017, hydrologists with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources said they had solved the mystery. Measuring the water flow above and below the falls and finding it identical, they concluded that the "missing" water actually emerges directly into the river downstream, rather than flowing into Lake Superior as the other half of the river's water does. (I always wondered about that.)

... a kind of cactus grows very large, but takes its time to do so? The Saguaro cactus, found in the U.S. southwest, can grow to be more than forty feet tall. Impressive, right? What's even more impressive is that it can take up to a decade to grow a mere one inch in height. (So it takes its time. So what?)

Sick days: Confessions of a recovering germaphobe

THE NEW SOUTHERN DAD



By KYLE DOMINY

Howard Hughes was an eccentric man to say the least.

One of the most famous wealthy figures in American history, Hughes was just as known for his odd behavior as he was his business dealings. He made movies and was a savvy investor on top of building and flying airplanes. Accidents and near death experiences while testing some of his flying machines are credited with worsening his obsessive compulsive behavior. Trauma does have a way of bringing out the worst in people.

But even before his life took its bizarre, tragic turn, Hughes was widely known as a germaphobe. He went through great lengths to avoid getting sick, going as far as burning his suits if he suspected he had encountered some sort of contaminate or, shudder at the thought, an ill person.

That proves the old adage, you can't hide money. With most suits being dry clean only, you can count on most people wearing dirty suits. I did, however, keep a suit tucked away in the corner of my closet for about a decade after a funeral turned into an illness spreading event. It was a miserable ride home from the cemetery, but I'll spare you the gross details.

I finally tossed the garment away with the trash recently. It's a shame, it was a nice suit. A black three piece with a faint blue pinstripe. Fit like a glove too.

But I digress.

As Hughes' mental state deteriorated over the years, so did his mysophobia. He became more and more irrational. He isolated himself for weeks on end, allegedly wearing tissue boxes on his feet to avoid contact with any surface. His hair and fingernails grew long. He avoided bathing and performing basic hygiene tasks. - a counterintuitive measure that somehow played into his delusion.

When he died he was a mere shell of the former dapper business tycoon. His body was so unrecognizable that the FBI had to be called in to analyze his finger prints.

It is a good thing that he didn't have kids.

This is being written on a sick day, pulling double duty as many parents must during cold and flu season, squeezing in a little work as a sick child rests in the other room. This is after spending the morning in the urgent care waiting room with other people exhibiting symptoms that make you want to burn your clothes. I was recently in an elementary school, visiting to read a story to a class of second graders and the halls echoed with a seemingly non-stop chorus of coughs and sniffles.

My grandmother always said that you can't run from being sick. You don't catch it as much as it catches you.

Admittedly, I'm a recovering germaphobe. There was a time in my life when I would have avoided crowds during flu season. A time when my hands couldn't possibly be cleaner but I'd wash them again.

Having children changed that. Kids are natural dirty bombs, innocently spreading whatever contaminates picked up throughout the day. Besides, getting a little sick every now and then is good for you. It helps the immune system fight off worse conditions.

But if you see me wearing Kleenex boxes on my feet, just know I need a little help.

COUCH THEATRE

By DEMI TAVERAS
King Features

"The Social Reckoning" (R)

The sequel to "The Social Network" (2010), which put Oscar nominee Jesse Eisenberg ("A Real Pain") on the map, is officially available to rent starting Nov. 24! This sequel jumps from the original events of the first film that took place in 2003-2004 to 2019, with Jeremy Strong ("Succession") replacing Eisenberg as Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg. "The Social Reckoning" touches on the 2021 Facebook leak and the overall threat against user safety that the social media platform presented at the time. Oscar winner Mikey Madison ("Anora") portrays Frances Haugen, the whistleblower who leaked the company's internal documents, while "The Bear's" Jeremy Allen White takes on the role of Wall Street Journal reporter Jeff Horwitz, who was heavily involved in breaking the news to the public. With mixed reviews from critics, the film unfortunately bombed at the box office, only earning $18.1 million against a budget of $42 million. (Amazon Prime Video)

"The Altruists" (TV-MA)

This series out now to binge is led by Julia Garner ("Weapons"), who looks almost unrecognizable without her signature blonde hair, and Anthony Boyle ("House of Guiness"). In just eight episodes, the series delves into the cryptocurrency exchange FTX, as well as its founders Sam Bankman-Fried (Boyle) and Caroline Ellison (Garner), emphasizing the fact that Bankman-Fried and Ellison were incredibly intelligent and hopeful with their company. But going "all in" on their dream results in a $36 billion fraudulent scheme that quickly turns their lives into a nightmare. Look out for comedian Matt Rife, who seems to be doing well after his recent controversies, Hudson Williams from "Heated Rivalry," and Jennifer Grey from "Dirty Dancing." (Netflix)



Kids Send Your Letter to Santa!

Email your Christmas list to us, so Santa can see it in the newspaper!

Email editor@tricountyconnector.com
All letters must be received by December 8th.
for inclusion in our Letters to Santa special section.

LETTERS TO Santa

Special Section Prints Thursday, December 24th!

A Special Section From
The Tri-County Connector

City of Mount Vernon
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
ADMINISTRATIVE AND RELATED GRANT SERVICES

Date: **Thursday, December 3, 2026**

Statements of qualifications and proposals are being requested from consultants with a strong record in successfully assisting local governments with grant writing for and implementation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs. Responding firms should be qualified to provide grant administration and related services including, but not limited to: preparation of the grant application; preparation of the Environmental Review Record; preparation of draw/disbursement requests; assistance with financial administration of grant funds and record keeping; assistance with holding public hearings; assistance with any required acquisition following the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA); assisting the engineer/architect with preparation of bid documents, advertising and conducting the bid opening; assisting the city/county with Davis-Bacon and related labor requirements including weekly payroll review and employee interviews; assisting the city/county with meeting Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) requirements; and preparation of close-out documents.

City of Mount Vernon plans to contract with a reputable consulting firm for grant writing and, if funded, for administration services for a FFY2027 CDBG project. The purpose of the project is to provide **sidewalk improvements that enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility for residents of a low- and moderate-income target area within the City of Mount Vernon**.

Information which should be submitted for our evaluation is as follows:

1. History of firm and resources
2. CDBG experience, including other DCA grant programs
3. Capacity to complete scope of work
4. Current workload
5. Scope and level of service proposed
6. Experience with similar projects and list of references
7. Fees associated with grant writing, and grant administration if the project is funded
8. Statement of Qualifications Form (attached)

City of Mount Vernon *also abides by the following laws as they pertain to HUD Assisted Projects: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Title 1; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act); Section 104(b)(2) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968; and the Build America, Buy America Act (BABA).*

Interested parties should request copies of the Statement of Qualifications Form prior to preparing and submitting their proposal. Proposals should be received no later than **5:00 PM on Tuesday, January 5, 2027**. Proposals received after the above date and time may not be considered. **City of Mount Vernon** reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals and to waive informalities in the proposal process. Questions, Statement of Qualifications forms, and proposal packages should be submitted to the name and address listed below:

Jennifer Sikes, City Clerk
City of Mount Vernon
435 South Railroad Avenue, Mount Vernon, GA 30445
Phone: (912) 583-2323
Email: jennifer.sikes@mtvernonga.org

Equal Housing Opportunity | ADA Accessible

Pheasant Hunting



LORAN SMITH

This is the time of the year that I have traveled to South Dakota for pheasant hunting, a wonderful experience that I miss very much. Although I am getting long in the tooth, I still believe I could knock down a cock pheasant or two if I had the opportunity to return to the "Mt. Rushmore State."

However, I am now pretty much confined to reminiscing.

Several years ago, an executive with Coca-Cola called with the news that his friend, George Mickleson, governor of South Dakota, was a big golf fan.

He wanted to know if I could get someone to host the governor and his party for dinner while they were in Augusta during Masters week. That was an easy assignment. I eagerly signed up for the opportunity.

At dinner the night before his party returned home to South Dakota, the governor expressed thanks for the hospitality and then asked. "Is there anything we can do for you?"

"Well," I said, "I've always wanted to go pheasant hunting in South Dakota." He responded with a generous laugh and then grinned, "Why didn't you ask for something difficult!"

That was the beginning of many years of the most delightful fall pilgrimages where the hunting was spectacular, the people as remarkable as the landscape, and warm hospitality enraptured you from the time you disembarked at the Pierre Regional Airport in the capital city of the state until you returned home.

Gov. Mickelson and his state treasurer, Homer Harding, were delightful hosts, who offered encouragement to bring friends for a few days of hunting pheasant and Canada geese. I never had a more enriching experience, which was followed by encore after encore.

I began taking friends who were all overwhelmed by the South Dakota pheasant hunting experience. The landscape is different but pleasantly appealing with the grain fields, prairie dunes, and the Missouri River dominating.

One morning, I killed a rooster while hunting near that great body of water and suddenly the scene brought pause to my day. I stood in awe of the river when I realized that Lewis and Clark and Sacagawea once came near where we were hunting.

If you don't get an emotional high with the ringneck pheasant experience, then there is something wrong with your system. South Dakota maintains an average population of 7.4 million ringnecks annually. Hunters are allowed to kill only three pheasants per day.

Pheasant hunting is not only fun for hunters but also an economic driver for the state of South Dakota. It is worth 500 to 700 million dollars to the state's economy annually. I am happy to have contributed to the South Dakota economy in the past and recommend that, assuming you enjoy such outdoor exercise, you do the same. You won't regret making a modest contribution.

Much of the fun of the hunt comes from stalking pheasants in the grain and corn fields. A cock pheasant can really accelerate on foot, but when you close in on them, they rise like a helicopter straight up, cackling as they take flight, and before you know it, you have missed an opportunity. The good news is that after that first trip, I can't remember not getting my limit.

You walk the fields, enjoy the hunt and the environment, and relax by a fire in the hotel lobby. Next, you find a nice steak restaurant for dinner—there seems to be one on every corner—and you are as fulfilled as you could be.

There is more good news. You get to do it again the next day and the next. As your trip comes to an end, you are filled with regret that you didn't stay longer.

For years, I had pheasants smoked in Pierre and shipped to my home address. I shared smoked pheasant with my friends, which was always a nice holiday treat for them.

During the Christmas season, I would enjoy smoked pheasant by a fire with a glass of red wine and raise a toast to pheasant hunting in South Dakota, one of the most emotionally rewarding experiences possible.

Thanks for the food and for the memories



CHARLIE HARPER
GEORGIA POLITICS

Last week I found myself back home. I continue to travel to or near the Atlanta area a couple of times per month, and this trip provided the window to join my mother for lunch, at Judy's Restaurant in Fairburn.

While I grew up in Fayette County, this South Fulton city was in the family's mailing address for the decades our house was on acreage on Hwy 92, about halfway between Fairburn and Fayetteville. Much of my childhood was spent with a run to "town" meaning Fairburn before school assignments pivoted us to Fayetteville.

Groceries were bought from Mrs. Lillian at the Twilight Food Palace. Our shoes were bought from Gordon's. "Mr. Harold" ran the barbershop where Dad and I got our haircuts, and the rest of the men in town hung out to solve all the world's problems. Shannon Mall didn't exist yet. Nor does it now.

My Grandfather had a small gas station and an ice cream parlor there once upon a time. It and he were gone before I came along.

My church also stood at the halfway point between the towns in the community of Fife. You could literally see the county line sign from the back steps.

On one side you had a county that was experiencing the first waves of suburban growth. On the other, part of a county that had to be absorbed by Fulton during the Depression and was experiencing outmigration. The central place that kept me grounded had one foot planted on each side, paradoxically going in opposite directions at the same time.

Dad used to call Fairburn "a dying little town." Somewhere along the way, it seemed to find its stride again.

Despite some of the main downtown buildings burning down in a few separate incidents, new shops began to fill the old storefronts. Amos' Pharmacy has given way to a pizza place. And then there's Judy's, where I found myself dining with Mom last week.

Judy's was originally in a spot in an older shopping center before they recently moved to a new (to them) freestanding building. The cafeteria menu and food remains largely the same. Wednesday is still "catfish day." Thursday offers an excellent turkey and dressing option. Fried chicken is a daily staple.

When we arrived mom noted a plaque above the serving line that read "Meals and memories are made here." She read it aloud. The connections immediately landed.

Judy's was introduced to our world by "Big" Frank Flanders, or as he was known in our house, "Uncle Frank." I don't recall my first visit, but I do remember it was after weeks of Dad raving about this new place where he and his lifelong friend had quickly become regulars.

The last time I took Dad to a UGA football game, we arrived late - just before kickoff and without a parking spot because he "needed" to have breakfast with Uncle Frank before we could leave. The walk from the East Campus lot to the stadium caused blisters that almost cost him his diabetic foot. But the man had priorities, and a good breakfast with his friend to solve some of those problems that weren't solved decades earlier at the barber shop was chief among them.

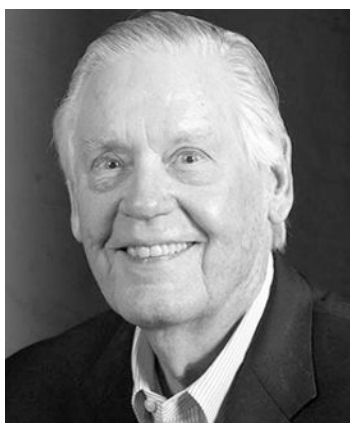
Mom and I had a good visit. We talked about some of those memories in Judy's old location decades ago – about Dad, Uncle Frank and many others no longer with us. We talked a bit about the future. But mostly, we were present – with one foot honoring the past, one looking ahead to what's next for us and the rest of our loved ones. Being present with a parent is the best grounding exercise ever invented.

We'll gather again this week, on Thursday. Judy's will be closed but Turkey will again be on the menu. The number at the table will be larger. It will be at "home" in Sharpsburg, a dozen miles and a county away from the old house on Hwy 92. There will be an entire generation there that never got to meet their granddad, an unfortunate family tradition. But there will be stories and memories, bound together by food from recipes that are largely the same as they were decades ago.

This week we'll give honest thanks. For the food. For those around the table. For those who came before us, and those no longer with us.

And then there's the memories. There are those that we treasure. There will be those that we'll share. And most of all, there will be those that we make, present and together.

Reflections on birthdays past, present and future



DICK YARBROUGH

If I seem a bit slower than usual today, I have a good excuse. I have just had another birthday. Another in a long line of birthdays. A very long line. The first thing I did this morning was to check the obituaries and be sure my name wasn't listed. At my age, one can never be too sure.

As has been the custom for the past 17 years, I celebrate the occasion at the annual Birthday Bash with great grandson, Cameron Charles Yarbrough, whose birthday is a couple of days before mine. When we began this tradition, Cameron Charles was in a highchair. Today, he is taller than his great grandfather. Times have changed but not the Birthday Bash. It remains a cherished family tradition.

Birthdays seem to be coming around faster than they used to. And everyone draws me closer to the end of my time on this earth. I used to think time was plentiful. Now, I wondered what happened to all the days past. And how many I squandered because I knew there would be another one awaiting me to get things right. I don't think that way anymore. Time is precious. Life is short.

My birthday always falls just before, just after or smack dab on Thanksgiving Day. That makes me a Sagittarius for whatever that's worth. We Sagittarians are supposed to be humorous. I suspect there are one or two of you reading this who might disagree with that, maybe even a Sagittarian or two. We are also known to be blunt which can come across as tactless or harsh. Guilty as charged. I'll try to do better in the future. But no promises.

There have been some memorable birthdays, like when The Beloved Woman Who Shared My Name hired an airplane to fly over Sanford Stadium on a football weekend with a banner proclaiming, "Nifty. Nifty. Dick Yarbrough is 50" to the cheers and jeers of 76,000 of my closest friends. Not sure what precipitated her doing that except perhaps for the surprise (to her) mock funeral lamenting the passing of her youth on her 40th birthday. The woman obviously had a long memory.

Birthday or no birthday, Thanksgiving is a time to take stock of my life and to give thanks for what I have been given. And I have been abundantly blessed. My family. My friends. Anything and everything about the University of Georgia, the oldest state-chartered university in the nation and home of my beloved Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communications.

I am thankful for my church and all within it who labor daily to save my sorry soul. My breakfast buddies, Dale and Mary Jane. Lois and Linda. Dora, Paul and Caryl. We haven't solved all the world's problems yet but we are working on it. These things take time.

I am thankful that God gave me the ability to paint a lick but didn't let me know it until later in life. It has given me something to look forward to in my old age besides aching knees and doctor visits.

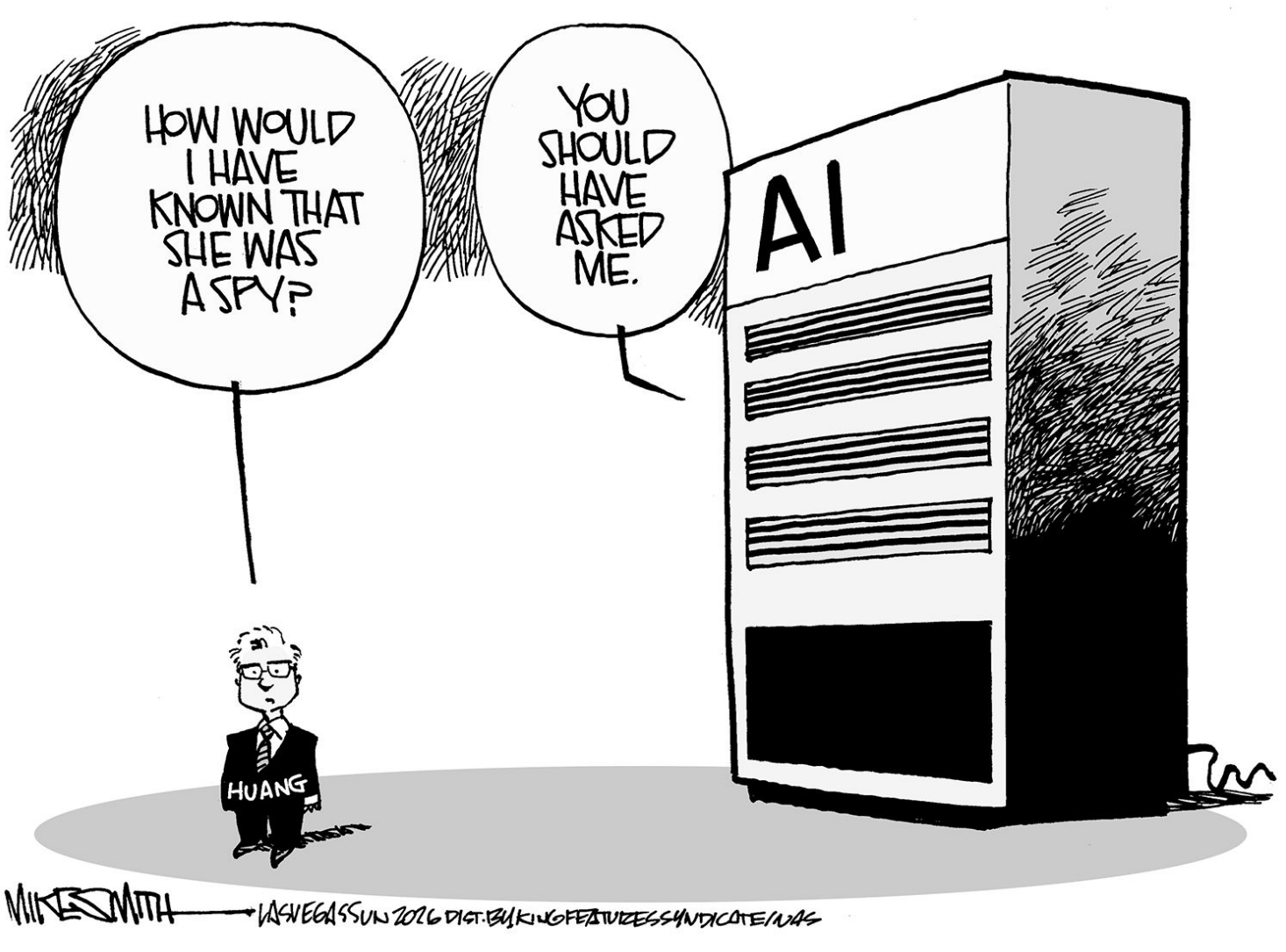
I am thankful that I had 63-and-a-half years with The Beloved Woman Who Shared My Name and that her legacy will live on in supporting the efforts of deserving second-career nursing students at Kennesaw State University to get their degree and to enter the nursing profession and who might not otherwise have had the opportunity.

I am thankful for Regina who cuts my hair and has being doing so for the past ten years; for Olivia, the greatest retail clerk in the history of the world, who makes me feel special every time I walk in the store; for Melissa, Alina and James who have taken care of me since my mangled toe surgery; for Philip, who drives me wherever I need to go. Little things mean a lot.

I am thankful for the opportunity to chat with you each week and to the editors for giving me the chance to do so. I don't take myself seriously but I take this job very seriously. It is a privilege and I must never forget that.

So, another birthday come and gone. What now? The Welsh singer Shirley Bassey says you don't get older, you get better. That is my birthday wish for us all. Older and better. And may we continue this journey together. Thank you.

You can reach Dick Yarbrough at dick@dickyarbrough.com or at P.O. Box 725373, Atlanta, Georgia 31139.



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S26-060
STATE OF GEORGIA,
COUNTY OF TREUTLEN
NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS
IN RE: ESTATE OF WILLIAM B. SIMONS
ALL PERSONS HOLDING CLAIMS AGAINST THE ESTATE OF WILLIAM B. SIMONS, LATE OF TREUTLEN COUNTY, GEORGIA, ARE HEREBY REQUIRED TO RENDER AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR DEMANDS TO ME WITHIN THE TIME ALLOWED BY LAW, PROPERLY MADE OUT, AND ALL PERSONS INDEBTED TO THE SAID DECEASED ARE HEREBY REQUESTED TO MAKE IMMEDIATE PAYMENT TO THE UNDERSIGNED.
THIS 6TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 2026.
WILLIAM B. SIMONS, III, GLORY RAJCZAK, AND JEANNE ELIZABETH SIMONS AS EXECUTORS OF THE ESTATE OF WILLIAM B. SIMONS, DECEASED
JANSEN KILLIAN
THE TILLERY FIRM, P.C.
404 DURDEN STREET
VIDALIA, GA 30474
(912) 537-3030
NOVEMBER 12, 19, 26, DECEMBER 3, 2026

S26-061
STATE OF GEORGIA,
COUNTY OF TREUTLEN.
NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS
IN RE:
THE ESTATE OF SHANNON MOORE PHILLIPS, DECEASED.
ALL DEBTORS OR CREDITORS OF THE ESTATE OF SHANNON MOORE PHILLIPS, DECEASED, LATE OF TREUTLEN COUNTY, ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED TO RENDER THEIR DEMANDS TO THE UNDERSIGNED ACCORDING TO LAW, AND ALL PERSONS INDEBTED TO SAID ESTATE ARE TO MAKE
IMMEDIATE PAYMENT TO ME.
THIS 6TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2026.
DANIEL J. O'CONNOR
ATTORNEY FOR CO-EXECUTORS, TERRY PHILLIPS AND RONALD PHILLIPS BRYANT & O'CONNOR LAW FIRM
P. O. BOX 28
VIDALIA, GA 30475
NOVEMBER 12, 19, 26, DECEMBER 3, 2026

S26-058
STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF TREUTLEN
IN RE: ESTATE OF CHARESE V. GOODSON, DECEASED.
ALL CREDITORS OF THE ESTATE OF CHARESE V. GOODSON, DECEASED, LATE OF TREUTLEN COUNTY, ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED TO RENDER THEIR DEMANDS TO RICHARD M. MCNEELY, ATTORNEY FOR TRECHAKA JA'TONEE DERESE GOODSON, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE CHARESE V. GOODSON 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 27TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2026.
RICHARD M. MCNEELY,
ATTORNEY FOR TRECHAKA JA'TONEE DERESE GOODSON
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ESTATE OF CHARESE V. GOODSON
RICHARD M. MCNEELY, P.C.
P. O. BOX 767
SWAINSBORO, GEORGIA 30401
(478) 237-4225
NOVEMBER 5, 12, 19, 26, 2026

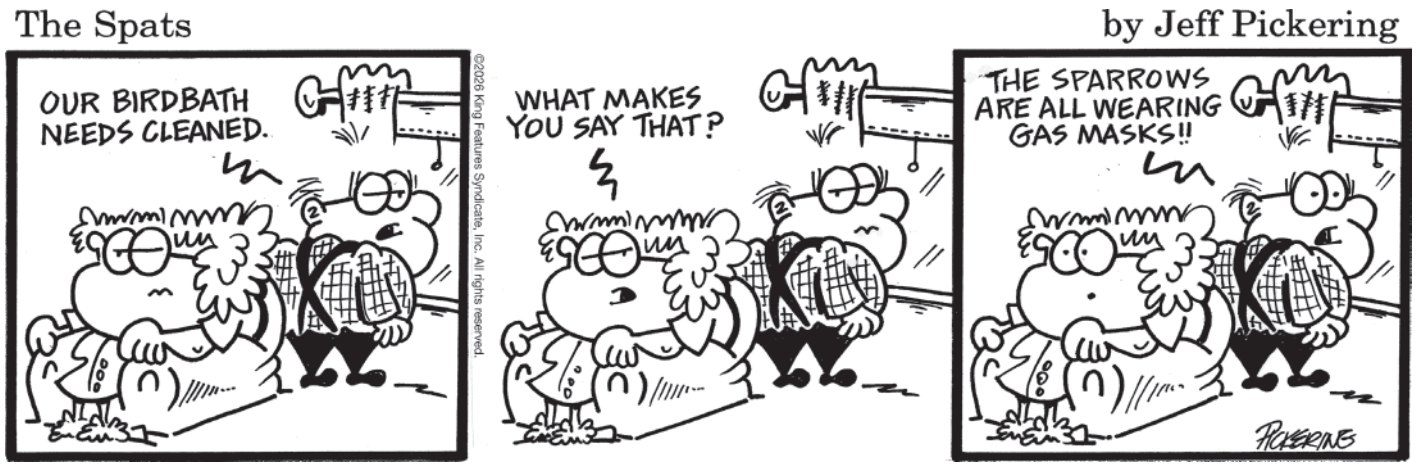
M26-004
CITY OF UVALDA, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, GEORGIA
NOTICE OF COMPETITIVE SOLICITATION
BID # 2512 DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 2026
PROJECT TITLE: EAST OAK STREET AND OTHERS (TIA & LMIGS PROJECTS)
PROJECT: THIS TIA PROJECT CONSISTS OF 00.28 MILES +/- OF GRADE, DRAIN, BASE AND PAVE ON EAST OAK STREET AND THE LMIG PROJECT CONSISTS OF 0.294 MILES+/- OF LEVELING, RESURFACING, AND STRIPING ON SOUTH RAILROAD STREET AND OTHERS
MANDATORY PRE-BID CONFERENCE: 11:00 A.M., MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2026, AT THE CITY OF UVALDA CITY COUNCIL OFFICE LOCATED AT 205 WEST MAIN STREET
UVALDA, GEORGIA 30473
BID OPENING DATE: 11:00 A.M., MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2026, AT THE CITY OF UVALDA CITY COUNCIL OFFICE LOCATED AT 205 WEST MAIN STREET
UVALDA, GEORGIA 30473
BID BOND: ALL BIDS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A BID BOND IN AN AMOUNT NOT LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT (5%) OF THE AMOUNT BID. A CASHIERS OR CERTIFIED CHECK MAY BE SUBMITTED IN LIEU OF A BID BOND.
PERFORMANCE/ PAYMENT BONDS: THE SUCCESSFUL BIDDER, IF AWARDED THIS CONTRACT, WILL BE REQUIRED TO FURNISH PERFORMANCE AND PAYMENT BONDS IN THE AMOUNT OF ONE HUNDRED PERCENT (100%) OF THE CONTRACT AMOUNT.
PAYMENT TERMS: THE SUCCESSFUL BIDDER WILL RECEIVE MONTHLY PAYMENTS WITHIN 30 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT AND APPROVAL BY THE OWNER'S REPRESENTATIVE OF A VALID INVOICE FOR THOSE SERVICES RENDERED.
TECHNICAL CONTACT: JESSICANAJAR ROBERTS CIVIL ENGINEERING, LLC
JNAJAR@ROBERTSCIVILENGINEERING.COM
THE OWNER RESERVES THE RIGHT TO WAIVE ALL TECHNICALITIES, REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS AND MAKE THE AWARD IN ITS BEST INTEREST.
NOVEMBER 12, 26, 2026

S26-059
NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS
STATE OF GEORIGA
COUNTY OFTREUTLEN
RE: ESTATE OF GLENDA SIMONS
ALL DEBTORS OR CREDITORS OF THE ESTATE OF GLENDA SIMONS, DECEASED, LATE OF TREUTLEN COUNTY, GEORGIA, ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED TO RENDER IN THEIR DEMANDS TO THE UNDERSIGNED ACCORDING TO LAW AND ALL PERSONS INDEBTED TO SAID ESTATE ARE TO BE REQUIRED TO MAKE IMMEDIATE PAYMENT TO THE UNDERSIGNED.
THIS 15TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2026.
NEILA MARIE SALE, EXECUTOR
3720 OVERTOOK DRIVE
MACON, GA 31204
NOVEMBER 12, 19, 26, DECEMBER 3, 2026

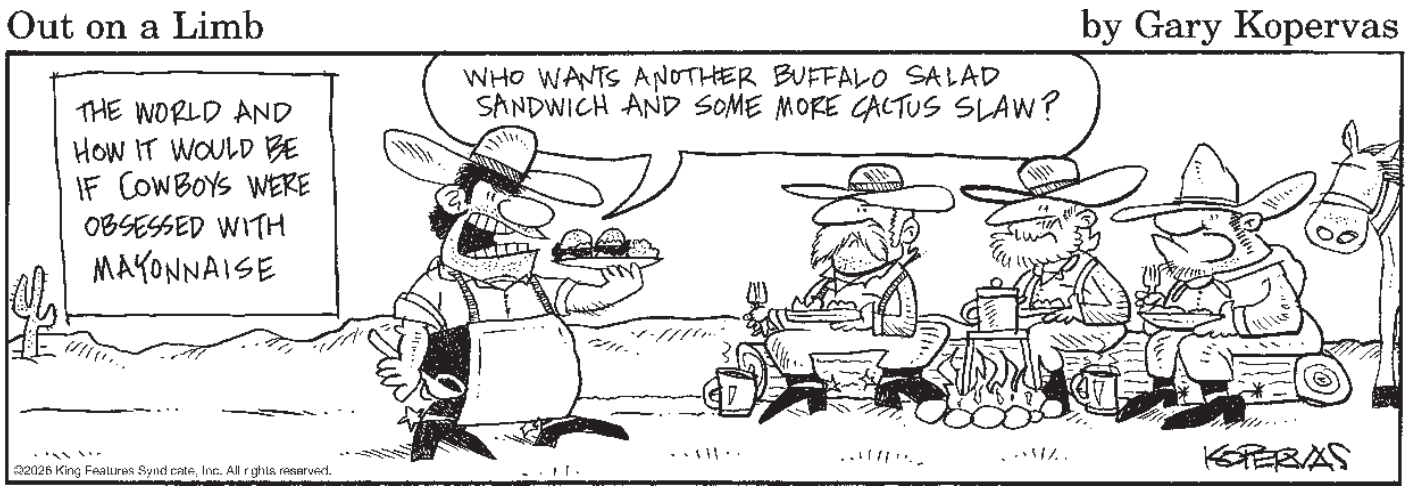
M26-005
CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, GEORGIA
NOTICE OF COMPETITIVE SOLICITATION
BID # 2513: DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 2026
PROJECT TITLE: CARVER STREET EXTENSION
PROJECT: THIS PROJECT CONSISTS OF 0.54 MILES +/- OF GRADE, DRAIN, BASE AND PAVE ON CARVER STREET EXT.
NON-MANDATORY PRE-BID CONFERENCE: 11:00A.M., TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2026, AT THE CITY OF MT. VERNON CITY HALL LOCATED AT 101 S RAILROAD AVE, MOUNT VERNON, GEORGIA 30445
BID OPENING DATE: 11:00 A.M., THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2026, AT THE AT THE CITY OF MT. VERNON CITY HALL LOCATED AT 101 S RAILROAD AVE, MOUNT VERNON, GEORGIA 30445
BID BOND: ALL BIDS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A BID BOND IN AN AMOUNT NOT LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT (5%) OF THE AMOUNT BID. A CASHIERS OR CERTIFIED CHECK MAY BE SUBMITTED IN LIEU OF A BID BOND.
PERFORMANCE/ PAYMENT BONDS: THE SUCCESSFUL BIDDER, IF AWARDED THIS CONTRACT, WILL BE REQUIRED TO FURNISH PERFORMANCE AND PAYMENT BONDS IN THE AMOUNT OF ONE HUNDRED PERCENT (100%) OF THE CONTRACT AMOUNT.
CONTRACTOR REQUIREMENT: CONTRACTORS SUBMITTING A BID MUST BE PREQUALIFIED WITH GDOT.
PAYMENT TERMS: THE SUCCESSFUL BIDDER WILL RECEIVE MONTHLY PAYMENTS WITHIN 30 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT AND APPROVAL BY THE OWNER'S REPRESENTATIVE OF A VALID INVOICE FOR THOSE SERVICES RENDERED.
TECHNICAL CONTACT: JESSICANAJAR ROBERTS CIVIL ENGINEERING, LLC
JNAJAR@ROBERTSCIVILENGINEERING.COM
THE OWNER RESERVES THE RIGHT TO WAIVE ALL TECHNICALITIES, REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS AND MAKE THE AWARD IN ITS BEST INTEREST.
NOVEMBER 12, 26, 2026



The Spats by Jeff Pickering



Out on a Limb by Gary Kopervas





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ALAMO POLICE

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insure deputies, which could put service levels at risk."

The council's decision in November resulted in an outsized attendance of residents for the December meeting, who were given three minutes each to speak to the council regarding any issues. Multiple residents expressed disapproval of the police department's closure, claiming the council had not been transparent enough about the process or the department's finances. Others expressed concerns that a merger could hamper the department's ability to patrol the city.

During the discussion, Woodard addressed the attendees, claiming the council members had also been surprised by Jones adding the item to the November agenda.

"I thought we were going to set up something with the sheriff, the council and citizens to talk about this before we made a decision, but this was not the case," said Woodard. "It was added to the agenda, and we didn't win the vote."

Woodard claimed the city had received a $246,000 grant for the police department to fund training and equipment purchases. While they had only used $14,000, the grant would remain in place until Oct. 31, 2026, and returning the grant due to the merger would present a logistical issue and damage the city's ability to receive grants in the future. She also noted much of the city's equipment purchased with grant money could not be turned over to the county in any way.

In response, Jones argued the city's usage of only $14,000 of the grant money was indicative of their inability to attract new applicants to the department.

"We can't get candidates," said Jones.

Woodard offered a motion to completely suspend all actions related to the turnover of the Alamo Police Department to the Wheeler County Sheriff's Office until after Nov. 1, 2026, when the grant expired. She also suggested bringing in a third party to review the merger contract at that time.

In the vote, Woodard, Geter and Laura Brownley voted for the suspension of the closure, while Jones, Bobby Cox and Villegas voted against. As the tiebreaker, Mayor Pamela Lee voted for the suspension.

"At this time, I don't feel like we've done our due diligence in what we need to do, so I vote with the yays," said Lee.

In response to the vote, Jones addressed the attendees and claimed the decision to halt the merger was due to Angela Wright's election. Wright was elected to the city council seat previously occupied by Bobby Cox, and was sworn in by City Attorney Perry Avery during the December meeting to begin her term in January 2026.

"Now keep in mind, there's a new council next month, and the control is going to change, and that's what it's all about," said Jones.

In the following meeting in January 2026, Jones asked the Council to reverse its decision to halt all actions to close the department, claiming it had lost an employee since the council's prior meeting. During the meeting, Jones likened the department to a commercial business suffering similar staffing issues to make his point.

"If you've got a company out here with two or three crews that do different things, and one of his crews goes from six people down to two, what do you think he would do when there's nobody applying, nobody looking for a job?" said Jones. "What do you think that business ought to do? I think he would quit."

Jones offered a motion to officially revisit closure of the police department, but the motion was denied in a 2-4 vote.

"Remember, being safe is what's important," said Jones. "By taking advantage of our sheriff department, by having him cover us and not receiving any funds to do it, we're strapping the county in the same respect, because he's having to cover us and go slack in the county."

To alleviate the issue, Council Member Patricia Woodard offered a motion to raise the starting salary of Alamo Police officers from $18 to $20 in an attempt to attract new recruits, which passed unanimously.

In April 2026, Jones asked for the discussion on the police department's closure to be added to the meeting's agenda during approval once again. During the meeting he proposed the council should "start the process, negotiations, whatever it takes to make it go that direction."

Woodard reiterated her stance that the council should wait until Nov. 1 before making a decision on the department, as a closure before then could interfere with the city's ability to receive grants. In addition, she argued the extra time would allow the city to explore other solutions and ensure the accuracy of its internal records.

"My biggest thing is it gives us time to just do some troubleshooting and have some open forum meetings," said Woodard.

Woodard's suggestion was to form a committee of council members and Alamo residents to "hash things out" before Oct. 31, so the council could make a more informed decision when the time came.

"I don't want to make a concrete decision to say, 'Let's turn it over to the Sheriff,' until we have done more research, more outreach, just more work on it," said Woodard.

Mayor Pro-Tem Villegas came to Jones' support, saying the council should begin the process of making the decision. According to Villegas and Jones, that beginning does not involve a vote, but rather direct conversations with the Wheeler County Sheriff's Office.

"I feel what Mr. Steve was trying to say is, 'Let's start trying to talk to the sheriff to see what it entails to get started," said Villegas. "I don't think he's trying to vote tonight. I think he's trying to really, really talk, instead of hinting around at it."

Ultimately, the council decided the police committee would be best suited to gather all the relevant information on the matter. Council members agreed to consolidate information and schedule an independent meeting to review said information while residents attend.

Now, following the expiration of the original grant, the Alamo Police Department is still dealing with staffing issues. City Manager Jeffery Floyd confirmed he had discussions with Interim Police Chief Roy Adams regarding overtime, with overtime shifts projected to last into November.

"We've got a few missing spots, and we've got a lot of overtime," said Floyd.

However, Floyd said the increased overtime was also due to the influx of grant funds, and said the overtime was likely to slow down in the coming months.

Floyd also confirmed the department had recruited a new part-time officer to its staff, bringing the Alamo Police Department's staff total to one full-time police chief and three part-time officers. However, the part-time officers are also employed with other law enforcement agencies.

"That's a concern... guys working 12 hour shifts, then coming over here and working 12 hour shifts or more," said Council Member Jones. "We've got overtime. That's spending more time than that."

The council members were also concerned about the part-time officers' limits for hours worked, though City Manager Floyd did not have the specific limit on-hand.

"I think there's only so many hours you can work, and if we're going over that, then we need to chat," said Council Member Woodard.

Mayor Pro-Tem Villegas suggested if the city opted to continue with its police department, then the council should advertise the role of police chief, as Chief Adams has been serving in the role of interim chief.

"I feel like that's just fair, to advertise the job if we're going to continue on," said Villegas.

However, Adams was not in attendance at the city council meeting, as he was away at training. The council opted to table the issue for their December meeting, so Chief Adams could attend and the police committee could convene beforehand.

RADIO

Continued from page 1

The police chief also proposed purchasing additional radios for the Soperton Public Works Division and Soperton City Hall at the request of City Clerk Samantha Richards. With the LTE radios, communication between public workers and city officials would be clearer and more secure against disruption, such as during Hurricane Helene in 2024.

"That was probably our biggest nightmare during Helene, was not being able to communicate with the public works folks," said Soperton Mayor John Koon.

The radios would be provided by wireless communications company Southern Linc, a subsidiary of Southern Company who has also provided LTE radios to Georgia State Patrol and other nearby communities. According to the proposal, the total cost of the radios was $3,343.60 covering 16 XP5 model radios, with half going to the police department and half to the public works division.

Council Member Kendra Madison-Harswell offered a motion to approve the purchase of the radios, which passed unanimously.

The IGA would codify collaboration between the two law enforcement agencies, both of which work together closely regardless due to proximity and mutual aid.

"They back my guys up a lot," said Treutlen County Sheriff Thomas Corbin when speaking to the Treutlen County Board of Commissioners on Nov. 2 regarding the IGA.

The agreement would also alleviate the Soperton Police Department's shortage of officers, which imposes longer shifts and limitations to recruitment efforts on the department. The police department's manpower shortage has been a concern of the council in multiple meetings, with Scott requesting increases to the department's salaries to attract experienced officers.

"Right now, he's hurting for help, so we want to help him," said Corbin.

Under the IGA, the city would pay the county a rate of $30 per hour per deputy and 72.5 cents per mile. Council Member Andrew Simons estimated deputies working 12 hours per shift with 50 miles per shift based on his own experience in law enforcement.

"So, hopefully what this is going to do is, number one, it's going to relieve our four full-time officers – chief included – who are working shifts right now," said Simons. "Give them an opportunity to have a little downtime while also backfilling and having a qualified officer within the city limits during those times."

The Board of Commissioners approved the IGA unanimously following a motion from Commissioner Rodney Meeks. The Soperton City Council also approved the agreement unanimously, following a motion from Council Member Simons.

"I don't think it's a permanent fix by any means, but I think it is a good stopgap measure," said Simons.

The IGA will last one full year unless the Soperton Police Department fills its seven allotted staff positions before the end of that year. Then, the city council can decide to do away with the IGA.

