

## **12/28/23 Mayor/Council Q&A**

### **with Jackson County District 3 Commissioner Chad Bingham**

- Jackson County is one of the fastest growing counties in Georgia, so it's very important to have a clear plan and goals. What does Jackson Co. look like in that vision...schools, roads, cities, emergency services? How do we get there?
- Property Taxes:  
It's good news that property values are going up, but most people aren't excited about paying more in taxes.

Property tax rates come from 2 sides: school board and county commissioners.

#### **Proposed School Board tax relief:**

@62 years old, homestead exemption increases to \$40,000

@65 years old, homestead exemption increases to \$75,000

@70 years old, homestead exemption increases to 125,000

@65 years old the valuation freezes (unless the assessed value decreases, which would then allow a "re-freeze" at the lower number)

Added back in the income qualifier at \$400,000 annual income (was previously \$25,000 and then was removed completely)

#### **The county commission has increased the relief on their portion as follows:**

@62 years old, homestead exemption of \$10,000

@65 years old, homestead exemption of \$50,000

Audience: When did the county find out about re-assessments? (1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023)  
How many appeals were submitted? The tax assessor's office told Cresswind residents that their appeals would be completed last. It appears that the land portion of every lot in Cresswind is assessed at \$125,000. The assessment should be calculated based on the size of the lot and square footage for each specific house.

There are 38,000 parcels in the county; 70% are agricultural.

- Schools:  
Commissioner Bingham has set up several meetings between the school board and landowners regarding potential new school sites.

Traffic near Legacy Knoll is a big issue; both cars and buses have difficulty getting out of Skelton Rd.

The Empower College & Career Center is located at the old Jackson County High School Campus and offers college courses (including night classes), vocational training, etc. People with expertise to share with the students in our county are needed to come talk to students in areas like welding, nursing, and agriculture. Our future is the children.

- The county will soon be working on a strategic plan which will allow participation from municipalities and citizens. This is expected to be a year-long process, so please share your feedback and input as the plan is being developed.
- The Jackson Co. Chamber of Commerce recently collected information via a survey and out of 1000 responses, Hoschton had the most. The survey results will be presented at the January 25<sup>th</sup> Q&A Session.
- Population Distribution across county: Areas along the interstate on the west side are growing more quickly than the east. We need communication between municipalities and the county regarding growth/changes/needs/schools/emergency services, etc.
- 74% of warehouses in the county are in municipalities; we are not interested in more on the west side. The west side needs more commercial and retail businesses to pay taxes to reduce the tax burden on residents.
- Bingham is not sure that anything can be done to stop build-to-rent neighborhoods at this time.
- Jail: The cost to house an inmate is \$60-70/day; the county receives \$22/day from the state; the inmates can perform labor for the county on roads and through work on the fire brigade. The Jackson Co. Fire Brigade has a learning institute through which it can train inmates. These inmates leave jail with real skills and certifications to utilize in the real world.
- Water delivery: The City is in contract negotiations with Barrow Co. & Jackson Co. to secure a supply of water for Hoschton. (Agreement with Barrow County has already been approved by Barrow's BOC)
- Many developers are willing to contribute to schools, green space, etc. if they are simply asked.
- Traffic management is behind in the county and it's expensive. The county is considering TSPLOST, which could generate millions; it's tricky when GDOT is involved; the county has offered money towards interstate ramps, roundabouts, etc.

Highway 53 traffic is a big issue. The City is continuously in talks with the county and GDOT regarding a bypass, funding, etc. There will probably be an cloverleaf interchange at Hwy

60 by 2050 and a 4-lane road through to Gainesville. Sam Freeman could become an extension of Hwy 60.

- There will be a traffic light at Hwy 53 and Peachtree Rd intersection as part of the Kroger development.
- Hwy 53 will be built out soon, so the next 5 years are crucial for planning purposes.
- The inland port in Gainesville (North Hall) is in the works and will reduce tractor-trailer traffic on our roads.
- Sales tax: out of 7 cents, 4 cents goes to the state and 3 cents stays in the county.

Commissioner Bingham shared that he must resign his District 3 seat in order to run for the Commission Chairman position. He expressed his concern that there are commissioners asking to change the charter at the state to allow a commissioner to be appointed for District 3 once Bingham resigns.

Present:

Mayor Debbie Martin

Councilmember David Brown

City Manager Jennifer Harrison