

Summer is winding down and tomorrow is the first day of a new school year in Newton County. Although the first 6 months of 2009 were challenging for many families in District 3, there is much to be thankful for as we move forward. We have 2 new theme schools in District 3 (Fairview and Clements), a new elementary school (Live Oak), and a new liberal arts academy (Newton High School/Oxford College). In addition, the Board of Commissioners has identified Fairview Estates as a recipient of Federal NSP money. The NSP program was established to assist communities with neighborhoods that have a high number of foreclosures. At the July 21st meeting of the BOC, partners were selected for the project. The partners will own the properties. They will be responsible for rehabilitating the foreclosed or abandoned properties, providing downpayment assistance and counseling to homeowners receiving assistance. Homebuyers must qualify for a mortgage loan with a bonafide lender who complies with sound lending practices. The grant will also provide for a community passive park within Fairview Estates. As the project progresses, I wish to schedule meetings with the surrounding neighborhoods for input on how to make this project successful and a model for future community development. We have a unique opportunity to make this project a community effort that will benefit all of the neighborhoods along Fairview Road.

TAX BILL

By now you have received your 2009 tax bill. Most taxpayers will not see much of a change from last year. Although many appraisals decreased and the millage rate remained unchanged, the homeowners tax relief grant was not funded by the Georgia General Assembly, therefore the net effect resulted in most taxpayers paying about the same as last year. The Governor has informed all state agencies that there is a shortfall and that most likely the state legislators will be called back into session this fall to address the shortfall. You can hear more about your taxes if you attend the Fireside Chat on August 20 at The Oaks Course. Barbara Dingler, Newton County Tax Commissioner, Tommy Knight, Chief Appraiser, and Charles Berry from the Board of Assessors will assist me in presenting a forum on understanding the tax bill and the tax digest.

TRAILS

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Newton County endorses the use of an extensive trail system throughout the county to connect neighborhoods with activity centers, schools, libraries, community centers, commercial and governmental offices. A public information open house was held on July 30 to discuss the proposed Turkey Creek-Yellow River Multi-Use Trail. This is a 10 foot wide trail that extends 3.8 miles connecting Turner Lake Park with the city of Porterdale. The project will be constructed using High Priority Protect Federal Funds and Transportation Enhancement Funds. There will be 2 pedestrian bridges constructed using federal stimulus funds. This trail will not only provide connectivity between communities, it will serve as passive recreation for bicyclers, walkers, and nature lovers of all ages and abilities. The trail will be constructed in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Street Smarts is the project engineering firm and Edwards-Pitman Environmental is the environmental consultant. These two firms along with the Board of Commissioners are interested in public input on this project. Please submit your comments to Cheryl Delk, Special Projects Coordinator, Newton

County Board of Commissioner, 1124 Clark Street, Covington, Georgia 30014. Displays and Plans will be available for review until August 10 on the ground floor of the Historic Courthouse on the square in Covington.