



CELEBRATING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

# INTUCKER

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## FROM THE MAYOR

Elections matter. Of course, that's self-evident – and even seems a little silly to say – but some have far-reaching impacts to which we need to give serious thought before we cast our votes. Last year, it was a Presidential race, as well as the entire House of Representatives and the balance of power in the U.S. Senate. This year, we have two City Councilmembers running on their records of service facing challengers who say they could have done better. It will be up to you to carefully consider and decide.

We also have a very important decision on a new one-penny sales tax called a special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST). DeKalb CEO Michael Thurmond – a citizen of Tucker – calls it a “transformational moment for DeKalb”. You'll hear a lot of opinions on both sides of the issue, but really, one of the beauties of local government is that you get to decide in a direct referendum. Unlike tax increases at the state and federal levels, your vote on the question will directly determine the outcome.

As with every election including our two Council races, I encourage you to look beneath the surface. Please educate yourself and separate fact from fiction. Spend a little time reading up on SPLOST and talking to people who have a thorough understanding of why it's proposed and what it's intended to accomplish. All the mayors of DeKalb had input into how this SPLOST will be structured if it passes. For Tucker, it represents about \$33 million over six years, which your Council determined would be spent mostly on road improvements and repaving, sidewalks, parks and public safety – including updating our fire stations. For more information, including the specific ballot question (it's long and complicated) and Tucker's project list for the money should the bill pass, please visit [www.tuckerga.gov](http://www.tuckerga.gov).

Wherever you come down on elections of your local officials, this SPLOST or any of the other issues that will come before us, I hope you'll be mindful that having a direct vote and a much greater influence on these issues were at the core of our decision to adopt cityhood for Tucker. It's sometimes messy or slower than we'd like, but we're taking on these decisions more locally than ever before and that's always a good thing.

## DATES TO KNOW

**October 9**  
City Council

**October 11**  
Community Council

**October 23**  
City Council

**October 26**  
Planning Commission



Want to look back at everything that happened in Tucker in the month of September?

Check out the *Tucker Rewind* feature on our YouTube page!



## CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

Tucker's City Council met twice in the month of September, making one major decision and laying the groundwork for two others.

The regular called meeting on September 11 was delayed to September 13 because of severe weather. At that meeting, Council voted unanimously in favor of a resolution to implement a special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST) should DeKalb County voters approve it on November 7. The SPLOST would mean an approximate \$5-6 million dollars per year for transportation and recreation projects in the City of Tucker.

That September 13 meeting also saw Mayor Auman swear in Steve Smith as the newest member of the Planning Commission and Bonnie Warne as the City Clerk.

The meeting on September 25 brought in another pair of new faces, as Rip Robertson was introduced as the City's first Parks & Recreation Director and Pat Wheeler was recognized as the new Administrative Assistant to the Mayor, City Council and City Manager. At that meeting, Council voted 6-0 to defer a decision on several amendments to the zoning code. Those changes would have dealt with new restrictions on massage parlors and linear lighting, as well as re-defining "family" to better balance protection of Tucker's single-family neighborhoods. Additionally, they held a first read and public hearing on a proposed 94,800-square-foot self-storage multi-warehouse facility. Both those issues are due for votes at the meeting on October 9.



Mayor Auman administers an oath to resident Steve Smith, the newest member of Tucker's Planning Commission.

# TUCKER'S FALL BUSINESS BOOM

While Tucker is known across Metro Atlanta as home to some of the region's most established and respected businesses, this fall there is a crop of new businesses popping up all over the City. Some are names you know, while others are brand new enterprises.

One of the hot spots for commerce continues to be the Tucker Meridian Shopping Center. Situated at Lavista Road and Northlake Parkway, just off I-285, Meridian saw big name retailers like Dick's Sporting Goods, Sprouts Farmers Market and Hobby Lobby move in over the spring and summer. Now there's a new phase of openings which are bringing restaurant options. The popular Newk's Eatery celebrated their grand opening in September, as did dessert specialist Nothing Bundt Cakes. By the end of the year, those will be joined by Coffee & Bagels, the joint venture of Caribou Coffee and Einstein Bros. Bagels.



Similarly, Main Street is getting some new dining options. Village Burger is setting up a downtown location in the Old Tucker Fountain shop. The restaurant is expected to open in early October. Into the spot previously occupied by M572 comes The Freakin Incan, a restaurant that will bring the taste of Peruvian cuisine to Tucker. Incan is expected to open in the fall.

Tucker's downtown also got a new tenant in September with the opening of Custom Crafts by You. The studio, located on Railroad Avenue, offers a blend of locally sourced boutique items for sale, as well as do-it-yourself craft classes. Owner Kenna Smith helps wannabe artisans of all skill levels to make custom wooden signs and other décor for the home.

With this diverse array of businesses flooding into Tucker, it is clear that, from a commercial standpoint, the City is very much headed in the right direction.

# ON THE BEAT WITH LT. SMITH

*Guest written this month by Sonja Szubski, City-Community Connector*

Recently, the Communications Department for the City of Tucker had the opportunity to participate in a ride-along with our Dekalb County Police Liaison, Lt. R.S. Smith. It was an evening filled with eye-opening experiences and lessons in gratitude.

We started our shift in Roll Call at Tucker Precinct. About a dozen officers were in attendance and, as they received updates and assignments for the day ahead, these men and women also took time to poke fun at each other and have some laughs, illustrating the "family" feel within the evening watch team.

From there we moved to directing traffic for the Tucker High School Homecoming Parade. Knowing it would be a long night ahead, we then met with other officers for dinner at Local 7. At the end of the meal, we found out that a generous citizen had paid for all of our meals. Lt. Smith commented that it happens quite often, but rarely with a hand-written, heartfelt note.

The evening watch wasn't too exciting on this particular night, so it allowed for more observation and conversation. For us, each traffic stop got our adrenaline pumping. For our seasoned host, it was routine. Still, it was interesting how he was noticeably aware of all that was going on around him. Officer safety and awareness, Lt. Smith told us, are key in any situation. Watching him approach and back away from a car was fascinating, as it was apparent that he was prepared for any surprises.

During the course of the evening's conversation, Lt. Smith made it clear that his fellow officers are his family and they all have each other's backs. He also spoke about how he and the other officers work very hard to foster a relationship of trust and safety throughout all the communities, but especially in those where the children might need a little more love and guidance.

Police ride-alongs are available to any citizen 18 years or older with a clean criminal background check. You can contact the Tucker Police Precinct and they will help start the paperwork process. Be prepared, though, as the officers do not alter their routine just because a citizen is in the car. You're going to see exactly what they see on a nightly basis.

To get a better picture of our police ride along and to learn more about Lt. Smith, check out the video we produced on our YouTube page.



## POLICE BLOTTER

**JUST SAY NO** – On September 13, Officer O'Brien was patrolling his territory and driving through the Stone Mountain Inn, when he was flagged down by a female saying that she had been assaulted. After interviewing her, it was discovered that she was at the location to purchase marijuana from a subject in one of the rooms. As she was in the suspect's room, she changed her mind and started to leave. At that time, the suspect struck her in the face with a closed fist and took her cell phone and cash from her possession. The officer determined which room the suspect was in and detained him without incident. The Criminal Investigations Division was notified and responded to the scene. Once they verified all of the information, the suspect was arrested for robbery and lodged in the DeKalb County Jail. Additionally, once management of the location was advised of the incident, they also removed the other occupant from the room and banned both subjects from the property.

**THAT'S NOT MY BIKE** – On September 19 at 3 o'clock in the morning, Sergeant Davis was patrolling in the area of the Walmart on Lawrenceville Highway when he heard an audible alarm going off. As he approached the Walmart to determine where the alarm was coming from, he observed a male on a bicycle with a backpack fleeing from the location. Once he caught up to the male at the other side of the parking lot, he no longer had the bike and was attempting to run away on foot. Sergeant Davis got the male stopped and began questioning him. The suspect admitted that he had just stolen the bike from the Walmart and hid it behind the Applebee's when he saw the police car. Sergeant Davis located the bike and was able to confirm through Walmart security that the suspect had jumped the fence and stolen the bike from inside. CID was notified and responded to the scene where the suspect was arrested for burglary and transported to the DeKalb County Jail.

# TUCKER FAITH GROUP AIDS IRMA RECOVERY

Hurricane Irma was a life-changing event for millions of people. The Category 5 storm tore through several Caribbean islands before making landfall in Florida and continuing on into Georgia and the Carolinas. More than 100 people lost their lives and so many more will spend the coming months and years trying to rebuild what was lost.

Yet in the misery of the storm, there were several lights. Groups came together from all across the United States, including those in affected areas, to volunteer, donate and give storm victims some hope. One of those groups went to work right here in Tucker.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a storehouse on North Royal Atlanta Drive. Typically a place where church volunteers help feed families in need, leaders with the church turned the facility into an emergency distribution center on September 13, packing and loading three trucks full of food and other supplies to send to Florida.

"When the call came in," recounted Stephen Aboagye, Manager of North America Southeast Area Welfare Production and Distribution for the church, "they said we need a few people to help us to start it. We ended up having about over 200 people that showed up."

Aboagye and his team oversaw scores of volunteers – young and old – packing boxes full of water, cereal and tuna fish. When all was said and done, 112,000 pounds of food and water were packed up and on their way to eight distribution centers across the state of Florida. While those boxes helped storm victims to survive the immediate aftermath, they were accompanied by a supply of chainsaws, brooms and other hardware items that could help residents to clear debris and get their homes back to being livable.



"It's so amazing in Tucker," Aboagye said. "The spirit of these volunteers is amazing. Most of them are members of the church, but some of them are not. [It] all comes with the spirit to bless people's lives."

With their hurricane response efforts complete, Aboagye and his team are shifting their focus back to the daily mission: providing groceries and household goods for down-on-their-luck families in Tucker and surrounding areas.

"We are here for the purpose to be a good neighbor," he explained. "We love the people around us. We are willing to serve."

If you know of a group in Tucker that is making a difference, let us know at [communityconnections@tuckerga.gov](mailto:communityconnections@tuckerga.gov) and we may share their story!

## DEKALB EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY



Mayor Auman and City Councilmember Robbins met on September 11 with Chief Sue Loeffler of the DeKalb Emergency Management Agency to discuss preparations for Irma. The weather system brought Tropical Storm-force winds to Metro Atlanta and left thousands across the City of Tucker without power for several days.

All residents are encouraged to sign up for CODE RED Emergency Alerts by visiting the DeKalb County website at [www.dekalbcountyga.gov/public-safety](http://www.dekalbcountyga.gov/public-safety) and clicking on DEMA.



# TEAM TUCKER SPOTLIGHT

James Duncan - Code Enforcement Officer



## OFF THE WALL

**If you weren't a Code Enforcement Officer, what would be your dream job?** My dream job would be Black History Professor.

**What's your favorite sports team?** Green Bay Packers

**What's your favorite movie?** The Book of Eli

**Have any hobbies??** Studying the Bible



**How did you decide on a career in Code Enforcement?** I was living in a large city and wanted to help people understand how to maintain and keep their properties without issues.

**Why did you decide to come work in Tucker?** Once I knew what was trying to be accomplished in a new start-up city, I wanted to be able to contribute as my previous skills allowed.

**What are your day-to-day responsibilities in Code Enforcement?** I respond to complaints, work with constituents, issue violations/citations, complete re-inspections and meetings and attend court appointments.

**What are the best and worst aspects of your job?** The best aspect is working with and getting to know different people. The worst aspect is having to see the poverty-stricken individuals and their struggles.



## COMMUNITY CORNER

### 10/7 - Eighth Annual Taste of Tucker

1:00-6:00 p.m., Main Street

Enjoy over 60 specialty dishes from more than 20 Tucker restaurants, live music and kids zone. Details and volunteers sign-ups at [tasteoftucker.com](http://tasteoftucker.com)



### 10/14 - Rivers Alive

9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Cowan Road

Tucker Civic Association invites you to help make a difference by cleaning up the South Fork Peachtree Creek. More information at [tuckercivic.org](http://tuckercivic.org).

### 10/15 - For Goodness Snakes Tucker

11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Kelley Cofer Park

Friends of Kelley Cofer Park will have balloon animals, face painting and, yes, snakes! The free fun takes place at the Peach Pit Pavilion Stage.

### 10/16 - Candidate Forum

7:00 p.m., Tucker Middle School

Tucker Civic Association, Tucker Business Association and Smoke Rise Community Association host candidates for City offices.

### 10/31 - Trunk or Treat

4:00-8:00 p.m., Main Street

Downtown Tucker will be overrun by little ghouls and goblins as they enjoy safe trunk or treating, live music and a free bounce house.

# TUCKER COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH FLORAL HILLS FUNERAL HOME AND MEMORY GARDENS



Helping families to navigate the loss of a loved one isn't easy. Norman Burkett knows that as well as anyone.

"[Bereaved families] are coming to me on the worst day of their life," Burkett says. "I want them to leave from being with us with peace [and] comfort that things are okay."

Burkett has worked in funeral homes for the past 40 years, the last eight of those years running the Floral Hills Funeral Home and Memory Gardens here in Tucker. Burkett and his staff recently celebrated the ribbon cutting of a 2,200-square foot expansion, which has doubled their reception space.

"We serve about 160 families a year and we want to make sure that

every family gets ample space," Burkett explains. "Families today are starting to want to have more events like catering...and things like that. So, we just needed more space."

A 15-year resident of Tucker, Burkett says there's no other place he would rather have his business.

"I live in Tucker, I worship in Tucker, I play in Tucker...it's a wonderful community."

Floral Hills is located at 3150 Lawrenceville Highway, just east of Interstate 285.

## CITIZEN OF THE MONTH HOLLY DUNCAN

"It is with great enthusiasm that I nominate Holly Duncan for Tucker's October Citizen Spotlight. Holly has been a dedicated Tucker resident for 11 years. In that time, she has been involved with numerous community organizations and efforts including Tucker Civic Association, Tucker Business Association, Taste of Tucker, NETWorks Cooperative Ministries - where she served as the Executive Director - as well as her current role as Founder and Executive Director of EIRO.

EIRO works in the Tucker community to build partnerships between churches and local community organizations. This past spring, Holly organized the Brockett Book Swap, a partnership between Brockett Elementary and Kairos Church. EIRO has also partnered with the National Alliance on Mental Illness in DeKalb (NAMI) to work with churches in Tucker to provide services to people struggling with mental illness as well as their families. So far, three churches - Northlake Church of Christ, First Christian Church of Atlanta and St. John Apostolic Holiness Church - have joined this collaboration. Holly is currently developing a pilot project with the City of Tucker's Code Enforcement Department. This partnership would connect individuals who want to come into code compliance but cannot for reasons outside of their control with church volunteers who want to serve their community.

Holly loves Tucker. Whether she is working at EIRO, volunteering at the local schools, participating in City Council meetings or sharing a meal with her neighbors, Holly is always writing a love letter to this city. Tucker is a great place because of citizens like Holly."



*Nominated by Ben Garrett*

# “ASK RIP” ANSWERS YOUR PARKS QUESTIONS



**Susan Kellett Gue – When will the city be taking over the parks in our area, and will they be acquired all at once or one by one?**

We are in the process of working with DeKalb County on dates and details. I can tell you that we do plan to assume responsibility for all parks and recreation facilities during the 2018 calendar year.

**Joseph Allen – I would love to know if we are planning to have organized sports in Tucker? T-ball, Softball, etc.**

As a longtime recreation professional, I understand how big an impact sports can have on a community – both for kids and adults. In the next few months, I will be looking at a number of ways to engage the community and get them involved in planning activities at our parks. To answer your question, a lot of it will be determined by a Parks Master Plan that will be completed next year.

**Jamey Wilson – I know maintenance will be a large focus in the beginning, but when will the talks start about improving some of the current forest parks? Like the two in Smoke Rise, for example.**

The talks will start soon, but they need not be happening at City Hall – they need to be happening in the community. I would hate the idea of someone coming in and unilaterally deciding which changes get made to which parks. This is why we need residents and other stakeholders to take an active role in the Parks Master Plan process next year. I've been on the job only a couple weeks and already I know that y'all have some tremendous visions for our parks.

**Laura Kresmin – Why are there no bathrooms or porta-potties by the playground at Henderson Park?**

That is something we need to take a serious look at. There are a number of reasons why this hasn't happened yet (logistics, public safety, etc.), but we're going to take a look at all those issues and see if there is a good solution. Remember, it's not just families at the playground, but also trail runners, hikers and tennis players who would like to see a bathroom facility in that part of the park. In the meantime, I'm glad to point out that a new playground and bathroom are in the plans for the Community Garden side of Henderson Park. Those facilities should be ready for use by the end of the year.



**Rip Robertson is the first Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Tucker. He takes the job with years of experience in Parks and Rec, as well as Public Works. Rip is a former Military Intelligence Analyst for the U.S. Army and is active with the Army Reserve.**

## JOHNS HOMESTEAD APPLE CIDER FESTIVAL



# TUCKERGA.GOV

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## TUCKER HIGH HOMECOMING

Tucker High School's annual Homecoming Parade marched down Main Street on September 22. The Tiger football team made it a happy homecoming by thrashing MLK 44-0.



## HI! HENDERSON! FESTIVAL

Hundreds turned out to Henderson Park on September 10 for live music, food and games at the inaugural Hi! Henderson! Festival.



**PLEASE DELIVER TO:**

