



INTUCKER

DECEMBER 2025 | VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 12



**FRANK
AUMAN
TUCKER'S FIRST MAYOR**

ELECTED OFFICIALS

FRANK AUMAN
Mayor

ROGER W. ORLANDO
District 1 - Post 1

CARA SCHROEDER
District 2 - Post 1

ALEXIS WEAVER
District 3 - Post 1

VIRGINIA RECE
District 1 - Post 2

VINH NGUYEN
District 2 - Post 2

AMY TROCCHI
District 3 - Post 2

CITY SOCIALS



nextdoor

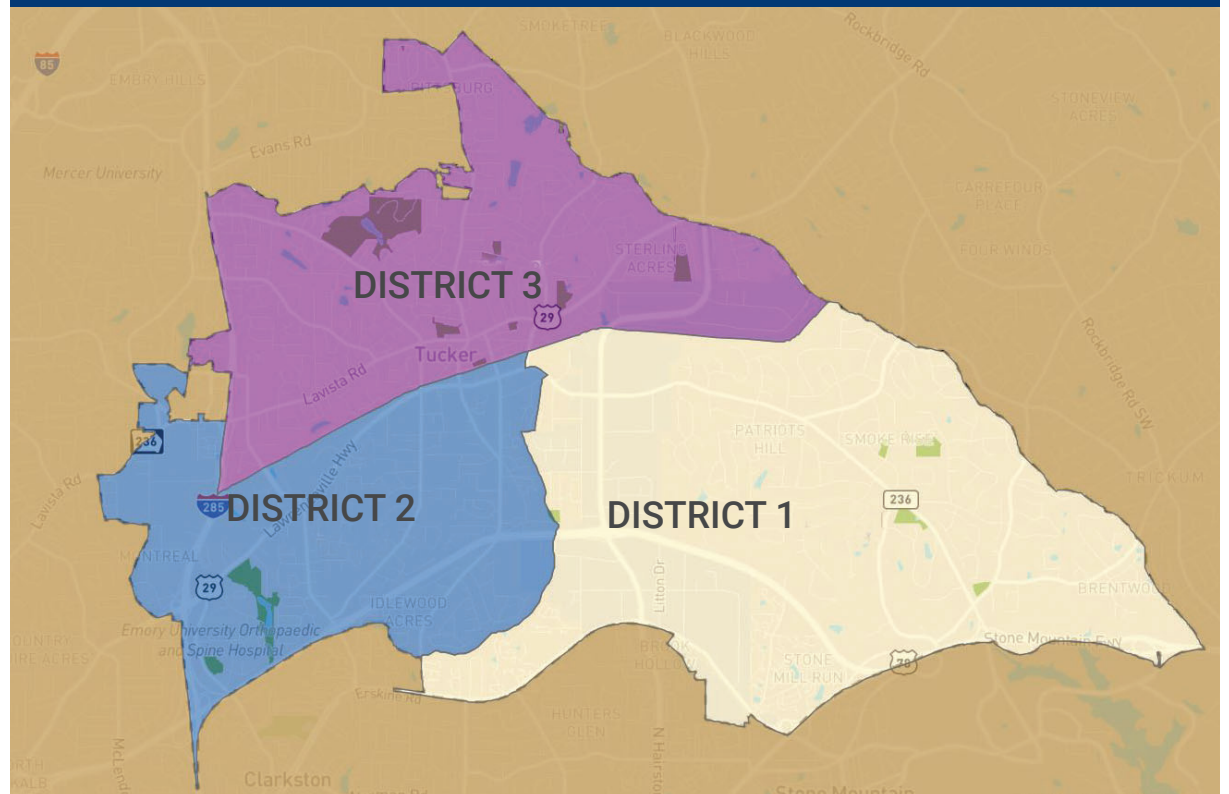
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Robin Stevens

DISTRICT MAP



EDITOR'S NOTE

SONJA SZUBSKI - COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR



This may be the hardest piece I've written in my three and a half years as Communications Director. Frank Auman was a friend long before he became my mayor. Side by side, we led community meetings and answered questions for groups ranging from a handful of residents to crowds of over 100 during the cityhood years. Frank had a unique way of weaving his way to the answer, telling a story, setting the tone, and then hitting a home run with facts and logic.

After the landslide vote to incorporate, there was some uncertainty about who would run for which seats. Difficult decisions were made, but I never questioned who should be our first mayor and I proudly say I was right.

From day one, Mayor Auman has led this community with grace and a servant's heart. While nothing in this world is without its hiccups and hurdles (and building a growing city is no different), he never claimed to know more than anyone else. Instead, he rolled up his sleeves to learn and, in turn, educate others on what it means to be a city providing improved services.

Frank, the past decade in Tucker's history has been marked indelibly by your wisdom, vision, and patience. As your friend, your constituent, and a member of City staff, I am deeply grateful for your time, dedication, and sacrifice for this community. My gratitude extends to your family as well. Gaye has been your foundation, sharing her kindness and gentle heart with all of Tucker. Your daughters have grown up before our eyes and built families of their own, with you and Gaye as steadfast and loving models.

I am excited for Tucker's future and confident it will be stronger because of the foundation you established. And I know you won't be far, just a phone call away.

Thank you, Frank, and congratulations on a job well done. I hope you enjoy a very well-earned vacation!



FROM THE MAYOR

My time as Mayor has mostly felt more like a sprint than a marathon. There's been

so much to do, we haven't had a minute to spare, so I haven't spent much time reflecting. But as I approach the end of my third and final term as Mayor, I've been asked a lot about what I'm most proud of, what I'd like to be remembered for, and what I'll remember as our accomplishments. And so I have begun to reflect a little about where we've been, where we are, and all that's taken place over these ten years.

When we began, we had three sets of competing priorities: We were literally starting from scratch, with no city hall or even an office to work from. We had no staff, no ordinances, no way to collect taxes or fees, nothing but seven newly elected officials and a city charter. And yet, we had the duties of any regular city to perform, starting on day one. We inherited zoning matters that were on a timetable and we had to hold hearings and make decisions. We had public safety responsibilities (there was a murder at the old Wooden Nickel Pub overnight on the night I was sworn in), roads to take care of, and many other immediate duties. And beyond that, we had a vision for things that needed to be attended to and improved around the city, including parks, beautification of our rights of way and public spaces, making ourselves attractive for new residents and businesses, and much more. We had no choice but to take on all three at full speed, and all at the same time.

As I look back across all we've accomplished, I can't point to one thing that I would choose as that overworked term, "my legacy". Yes, we've created and restored and built some great parks and public spaces, like the Rec Center, Fitzgerald Field, and the brand-new Tucker Town Green. We've paved something like 130 miles of roads, installed several miles of new sidewalks, and built the first segments of an ambitious trail system. We've improved the look and feel of downtown and brought in new businesses all around the city. I love to hear from people who knew Tucker in years gone by, but are blown away when they see it anew. But I think the two greatest accomplishments, and the two that will have the most lasting impact are less tangible.

First, we have been extraordinarily successful at placemaking. That is, while many people knew of a place called Tucker previously, Tucker has now become a place where people want to be, and a place where they know what to expect when they come. My expression of that has been that we want to be a place where a person can live, work, play and pray for their whole life – the length of it and the breadth of it. A real hometown, where a person can choose to do all of those things with their neighbors and in a very manageable geographic area. The average age of our population has declined significantly, and that's not only a reflection of our success, but one of the most significant reasons for confidence in our future.

And secondly, we have focused from the beginning on getting the processes right. That means conducting ourselves with integrity, respecting our citizens, and establishing our character as a city in a way that will serve as an example for the years and leaders to come. We quite literally kept front of mind the fact that everything we did for the first time (which was pretty much everything!), would instantly be "the way we've always done it". We were very conscious to do them in a way we'd be proud to have them done for the rest of our lives.

And so, as we come to one of our last firsts, that is, electing and installing a new mayor for the first time since the beginning, I hope and believe we're leaving behind a city and a government that will stand the test of time and remain a point of pride for all of us. It's been a joy and an honor, and I look forward to encouraging and cheering on the leadership that will move that legacy forward.

DATES TO KNOW

- **DECEMBER 1, 4:30 P.M.**
Downtown Development Authority
- **DECEMBER 2**
Zoning Board of Appeals
- **DECEMBER 6, 4-7 P.M.**
North Pole at Tucker
Tucker Town Green
4226 Railroad Avenue
- **DECEMBER 8**
Mayor & City Council Meeting
- **DECEMBER 24 - 25**
City Buildings Closed in
Observance of Christmas Eve
and Christmas Day



U.S. MARINE CORPS RESERVE
For more information visit www.toysfortots.org

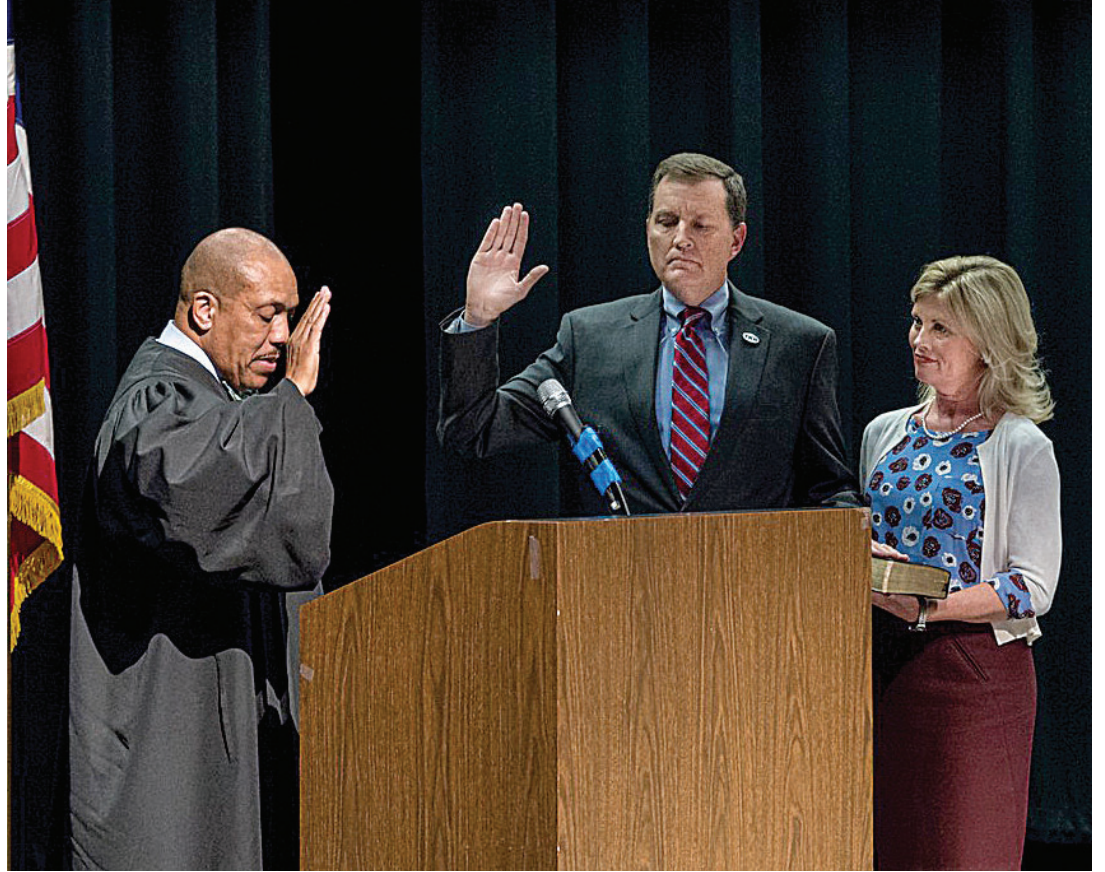
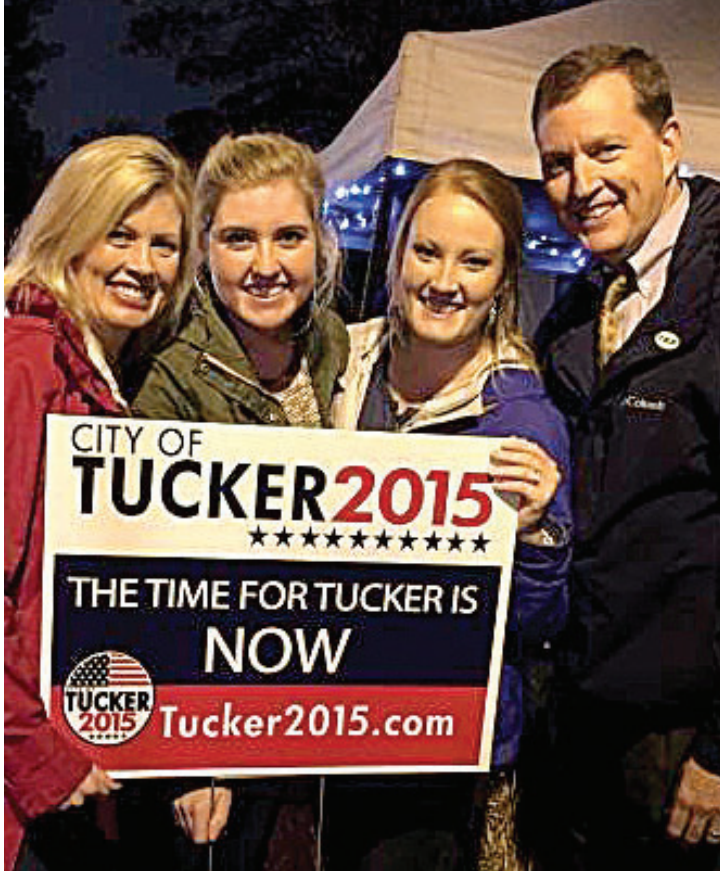
**TUCKER REC. CENTER IS AN OFFICIAL
DROP-OFF SITE FOR TOYS FOR TOTS.**

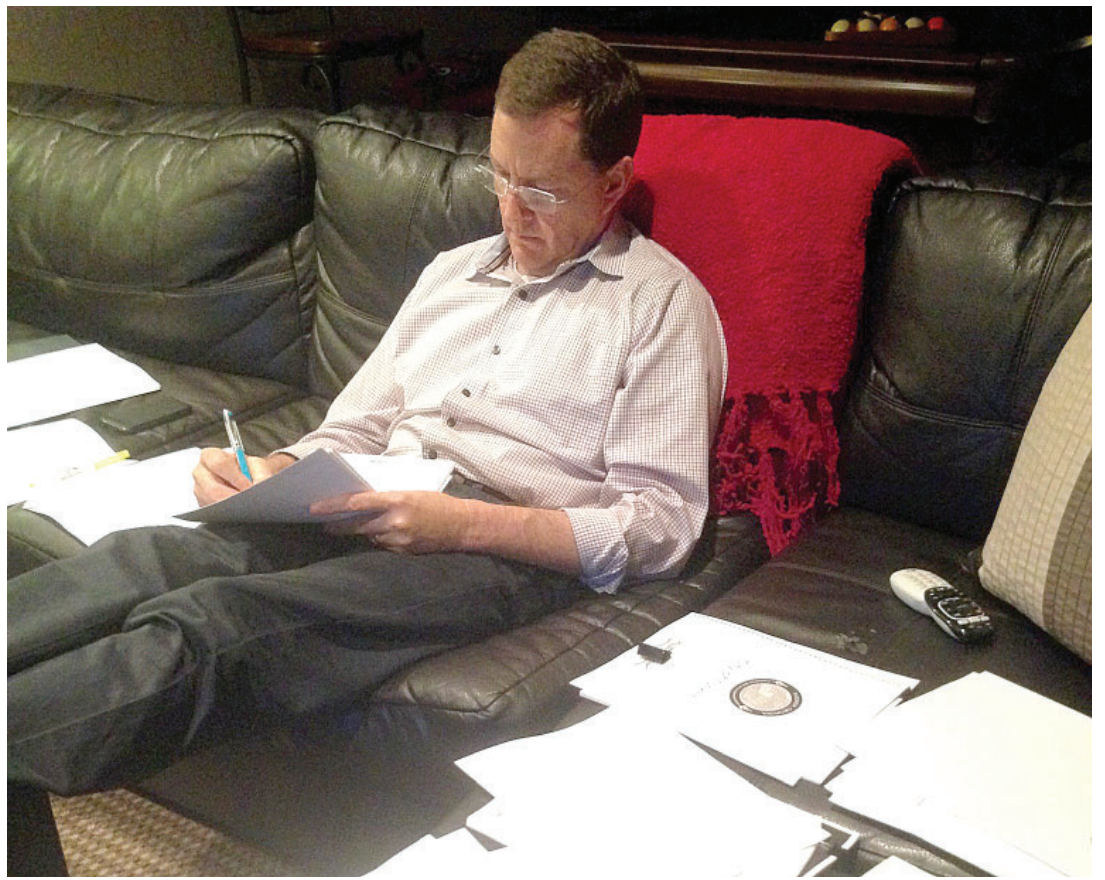
THROUGH DECEMBER 20, BRING NEW, UNWRAPPED TOYS AND PLACE THEM IN THE BOXES IN THE MAIN LOBBY DURING REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS. YOUR KIND DONATIONS PROVIDE GIFTS FOR LOCAL CHILDREN IN NEED.

FEATURE STORY

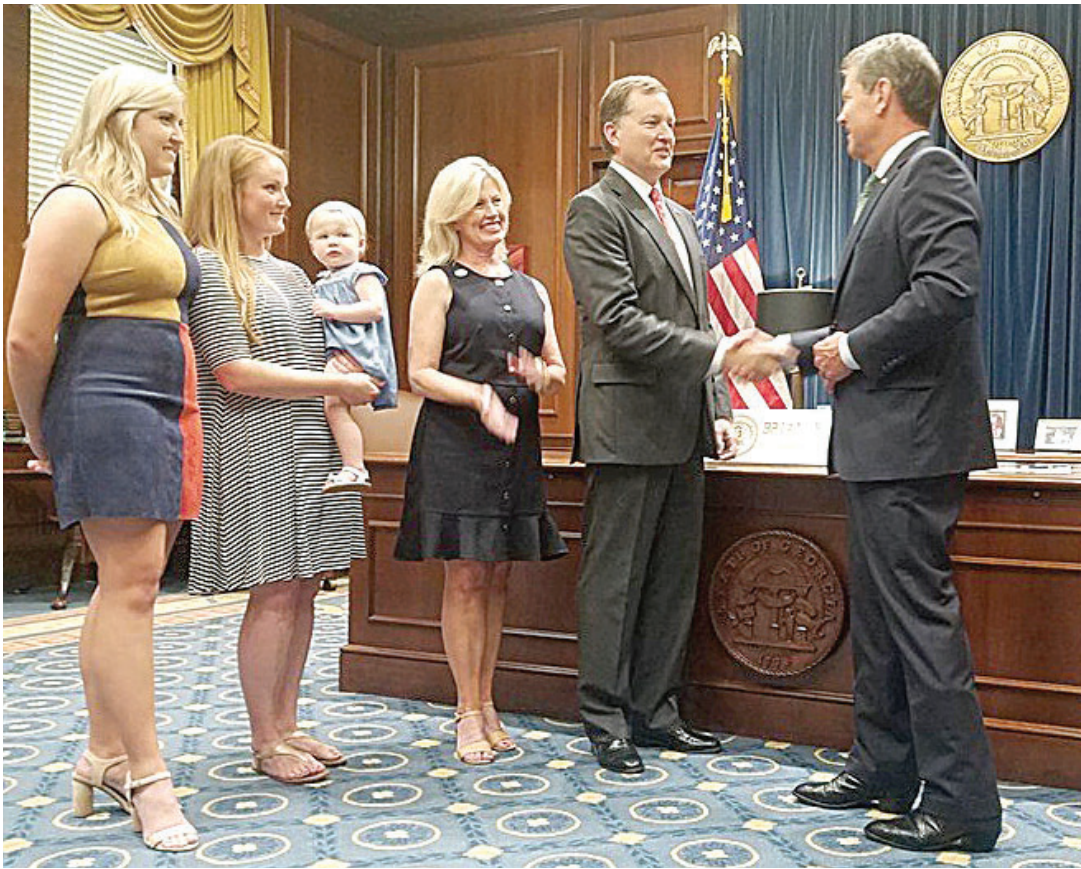
HIS HONOR

FRANK AUMAN'S DECADE OF SERVICE









CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

GAYE AUMAN



She's never run for office, but she's been a public servant as much as any elected official. She doesn't stand and speak before crowds, but her words have accomplished more than I can say. She's not the one in the spotlight – she's the one pointing it at others.

She meets difficult times with faith and equanimity, and difficult people with grace and empathy. She has more than her share of things to complain about, but never does. She's had the most vile and terrible things said about her and the ones

she loves, but never repays evil with evil. She's widely praised for her work and her character, never seeking praise, but accepting it with genuine humility.

She's served by enabling me to serve, and never complained about the sacrifices she's made in doing so. She's encouraged me always, and "prodded" me on occasions when it was needed. She's stood by me at a thousand events and stood up for me when she felt I was treated unfairly, always insisting we remain positive and take the high

road. She's been subjected to the frustrations of my work, but kept a peaceful place of respite at home. She's doubled my joy by sharing it, and cut my troubles in half by sharing them.

Since the cityhood effort and during the time I've served as Mayor, she's welcomed two new sons-in-law and become Mae Mae to six grandchildren, for whom she'd drop anything on a moment's notice. She's lost her dad and survived an illness that, according to the doctors, should

have ended her life. She's cared for her mom and my dad through it all. She's been a devoted tennis mom, twice president of the Mountain Mums Garden Club, and devoted countless hours to her church, friends and charitable causes.

For all these reasons and many more, I'd like to nominate Gaye Auman as my Citizen of the Decade.

Thanks for your consideration.

Submitted by Frank Auman



BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

DOROTHY MAE'S SOUL FOOD KITCHEN



Rickey Thomas has spent more than 30 years in the restaurant industry, opening and managing multiple establishments. After helping launch six restaurants, he chose to dedicate his seventh to the woman who taught him everything he knows his mother, Dorothy Mae. She is the cornerstone of his success and the inspiration behind one of Tucker's newest eateries, Dorothy Mae's Soul Food Kitchen.

"I was going to call this the Taste of Seafood but I wanted to honor my mom," Thomas said. "She is 91. It's the right thing. I was considering putting Ricky but Dorothy Mae's is what I wanted to do."

Thomas grew up in New York, surrounded by flavor-packed meals and a bustling household of seven siblings. Times were tough, he said, but eating well never was.

"When she was in that kitchen, I constantly watched her," he said. "I'd watch her get stuff out of the cabinets. I was always amazed by how much seasoning she had in there."

Holiday meals were especially memorable. As Thomas got older, he joined his mother in the kitchen to help prepare the family feast. Everyone gathered at a long table, filling up with laughter, warmth, and Dorothy Mae's cooking.

Eventually, one of his sisters decided the rest of New York needed to taste their mother's food. In 1993, Thomas and his siblings opened A Taste

of Seafood. The restaurant thrived, eventually expanding to four additional locations. Lines formed outside before opening, and the rush never stopped. Thomas remembers days with no breaks from open to close.

The restaurant industry has brought him immense joy and fulfillment. One of its greatest rewards was meeting his wife, Sandra Thomas. He met her at A Taste of Seafood while managing the restaurant, and together they started a family. From there, they moved to Arizona and eventually settled in Georgia. In 2020, Thomas decided to take another shot at opening a restaurant, launching Boxete Kitchen in Suwanee and it was a hit. Just like in New York, customers loved his food.

"I had a few people come in and say this food reminds them of a place in New York," Thomas said. "I'd ask, 'A Taste of Seafood?' and they'd say, 'Yeah, I used to go there years ago.' And I tell them, 'I'm the one that cooked it.'"

After four successful years, Boxete Kitchen closed when the building's owner made other plans. Thomas pivoted, and his wife found a new opportunity. She discovered the current location while making a catering run for Boxete Kitchen. Thomas saw the space and decided to open shop in the summer of 2025. Now, he's serving satisfied customers in the Tucker community.

The menu features a variety of soul food favorites and Thomas's own creations featuring

wings, shrimp, catfish, chicken and waffles, and cornbread. One crowd favorite is the mac and yams. Among desserts, Thomas takes pride in his sweet potato cheesecake recipe, he believes no one has perfected more than him. "The sweet potato cheesecake is something special to taste," he said. The restaurant also offers healthier options, such as vegetables, for those who prefer not to eat fried food.

"A lot of people who want to eat healthy come in and say they don't want anything fried," Thomas said. "I go get some baked wings and tell them, 'Here, taste that.' Then they say, 'That's what I want.'"

The new restaurant continues to attract customers craving more of Dorothy Mae's soulful cooking. Thomas hopes to grow the business and open additional locations across the state. For now, he's grateful to serve the Tucker community and carry on the passion his mother passed down to him. His favorite part about running the restaurant is doing what he loves most, cooking, just like Dorothy Mae taught him.

Dorothy Mae's Soul Food Kitchen is located at 1927 Lakeside Parkway, Suite K21, Tucker, GA 30084. You can view their menu and order online at dorothysoulfood.com

CITY COUNCIL UPDATE



Lisa Anderson and John Summers (pictured fourth) from Handy Ace Hardware, Bridget Brady of Wine & Whimseys Dr. Dell Anderson of Heart & Soul Veterinary Clinic accept the Proclamation for Small Business Saturday from the City of Tucker. Photo by Micah Seibel

Tucker's Mayor and Council met for the first meeting of the month on November 10 with an excused absence of Council Member Roger Orlando.

In honor of Veterans Day, members of the American Legion Post #207 led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Post burned down in 2019 and has since been focused on rebuilding, both the building and the membership.

After public comment and Mayor's comments, the Council voted 6-0 to approve both the agenda for the evening and the consent agenda. The consent agenda included the previous month's minutes and a contract for stormwater cleaning and CCTV at 18 locations in the City.

City Staff presented on two upcoming projects, the proposed tennis court rehabilitation and additional parking spots at Rosenfeld Park and the two roundabouts on Idlewood Road. Both projects are ready to go out to bid and are looking to start construction in the new year.

The first second read and public hearing for the evening was regarding a SLUP for a massage parlor inside Northlake. The Mayor and Council voted 6-0 to defer to the December 8 meeting due to the wish to have a more in-depth discussion on the

staff recommended conditions of the SLUP, specifically the sixth condition pertaining to the addition of a sidewalk.

The Mayor and Council approved an amendment to a previous rezoning to remove the four conditions pertaining to rental components at 2245 Northlake Parkway. The body then approved the request for a 12-month extension of a SLUP for 2247 and 2251 Northlake Parkway which was approved initially approved in July 2022.

The Council then approved the proposed townhome development of five units at 4372 Chamblee Tucker Road.

The second meeting of the month was a quick one with just five members present and two via Zoom. Tucker small business owners from Handy Ace Hardware, Wine & Whimsey and Heart & Soul Vet Care lead the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance and were then presented a proclamation from Mayor Auman in honor of Small Business Saturday.

Pond & Co presented an update on the ongoing Trails and Transportation Master Plans Update as well as the Lawrenceville Highway Beautification Corridor Study. This was followed by staff reports on the October financials and potential upcoming agenda items.

The Mayor and Council heard the first read of an ordinance to amend the Tucker code regarding solid waste to provide for the creation of special districts. The Council is expected to vote on the ordinance at the December meeting.

The final two agenda items were contracts for Public Works contracts. Both were approved unanimously. The first was for the Mountain Industrial Boulevard at Hugh Howell Road intersection improvement project and the second was for the construction of Tucker's first gateway signage and landscaping.

After executive session, Mayor Auman and Council returned to vote approval on the purchase of right of way and easement with Sam's Club on Mountain Industrial.

Tucker's Mayor and Council meet the second and fourth Monday of each month at City Hall, 1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350B, Tucker, Georgia 30084. You may also watch online at tuckerga.gov/agendas. Reminder that the Council will meet only once in December on the eighth starting with a farewell reception for Mayor Auman whose term is ending due to term limits. Join the City in celebration starting at 6 p.m. in City Hall.

AROUND TOWN

UPCOMING EVENTS IN TUCKER

HOLIDAY CELEBRATION



**North Pole
at Tucker**

NOTE: LOCATION CHANGE

**December 6
4-7 p.m.**

**TUCKER TOWN GREEN
4226 RAILROAD AVENUE**

**DECEMBER
17-21**



**HOLIDAY
PICKLEBALL
TOURNAMENT**



**WINTER CONCERT
SERIES RETURNS**



**JAN. 9
JAN. 23
FEB. 6
FEB. 20**

**JANUARY 19
MLK DAY**

Join us in honoring
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
with a Day of Service

**TRAIL
MAINTENANCE
@KELLEY COFER PARK**

MAKE IT A DAY ON, NOT A DAY OFF

[TUCKERGA.GOV/PARKS/EVENTS](https://tuckerga.gov/parks/events)



TUCKER *Community Corner*



Tucker celebrated the opening of the Tucker Town Green on November 14. Over one thousand people attended while current and past Council was honored as well as those that played a part in this gem of a park in the heart of the City.