

# In the REGION

May 2017

Valdosta

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Waycross

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A publication of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission

A leader in the development of local and regional programs since 1963.

## Three Local Governments Awarded Funding for Pedestrian Infrastructure

*Transportation and Environment: Corey Hull*

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) is excited to announce that the City of Lakeland, the City of Folkston, and the City of Waycross, are all awardees of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) FY17 Multimodal Safety and Access Grant (MMSAG). The SGRC would also like to thank all of the local governments in our region that applied for this grant.



The Multimodal Safety and Access Grant was created by the GDOT to help local governments throughout the state advance bicycle and pedestrian initiatives. There were various types of projects that were eligible for funding through this grant such as, but not limited to sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps for sidewalks, a median refuge island, pedestrian scale lighting, rectangular rapid flashing beacons, pedestrian hybrid beacons, shoulder widening, and protected bicycle lanes. Projects have to be safety-focused, located on a state route system, and connect or improve the connection of existing facilities for biking and/or walking.

Below is a description of the three projects that were awarded. These pedestrian infrastructure projects will allow residents to safely access amenities located in their communities.

**City of Lakeland:** An ADA compliant sidewalk with stand up curb and gutter on the west side of SR 135 (South Oak St. By-Pass). This sidewalk will close a gap in pedestrian infrastructure and connect residents to Lanier County Headstart, recreational facilities, parks, grocery stores, schools, faith services, and dining within one quarter mile of the project location.

**City of Folkston:** A sidewalk on the west side of SR 12, as well as adding a crosswalk from the west side to the east side of SR 121. This sidewalk and crosswalk will allow residents of Folkston and Homeland safe access to Charlton County High School, Charlton County Public Library, recreational facilities, and a retail outlet.

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**City of Waycross:** A sidewalk along both sides of SR520/South GA Parkway West. These sidewalks will connect a condensed housing area to multiple restaurants and convenience stores. It will also bridge a gap from the housing units to the existing sidewalk that leads to the Ware County Recreation Complex and Ware County High School.

Once again, congratulations to the MMSAG grant recipients throughout our region and thank you to all of our local governments that applied. Let's continue to work together as opportunities arise to make our region more pedestrian friendly.

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## Supporting the 2020 LUCA Initiative

*Geographic Information Systems: Rachel Strom*

On Tuesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, Mr. William Curry of the US Census Bureau conducted an informational session on the upcoming 2020 LUCA (Local Update of Census Addresses) at the Valdosta Office of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission. Those in attendance were not only briefed on what to expect in the coming months with the LUCA program, but also with other U.S. Census programs. Mr. Curry explained the importance of an accurate address database and how it affects Census population numbers, which also affects community Federal funding opportunities. For communities who were not able to attend the informational session, some of the same information can be found at the following website: <https://www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/luca.html>

Important dates include:

July 2017—Invitation letter and registration forms mailed to HEO or TC of all eligible governments.

October 2017—Training workshops begin. Self-training aids & Webinars available online.

December 2017—Deadline to register for LUCA.

February 2018—Participation materials mailed to registered participants.

August 2019—Feedback materials offered to participants with the results of address canvassing.

**April 1, 2020—Census Day**

And of course, as in past years, SGRC GIS is eager to help you along the way! If you have any questions, please contact Rachel Strom [rstrom@sgrc.us](mailto:rstrom@sgrc.us)



## It's Time to Plan...

*Information Technology Systems: Chris Strom*

Many of our local governments are beginning to assemble their budgets for a new fiscal year and there's an old adage attributed to Benjamin Franklin that applies to this process. He said, "Failure to plan, is planning to fail." While this applies to all aspects of local government, it is especially true for IT assets that your government relies upon to function. Because of this, IT support and hardware replacement should be an important part of your FY2018 budget.

While incidental IT related problems will arise from day to day, our technicians often respond to critical IT issues that are entirely avoidable, more costly and more disruptive simply because an upgrade or replacement of software or hardware were not planned for. In many of these cases, another old adage was substituted - "if it isn't broke, don't fix it". While this approach makes trimming a budget easy, it also sets users and local governments up for failure, and usually at the most inopportune time.

At this time of year, we ask all of our local governments to take a serious look at the computers and IT infrastructure you rely upon to keep going each day. Below are some basic questions that may help you to assess how well you have planned for your IT needs in the next fiscal year.

- **In critical service areas, what are the ages of the desktops and servers being used?**
- **Are any of the above out of manufacturer warranty?**
- **Are any critical services provided on computers running an unsupported operating system or software?**
- **Do all computers on the network have up-to-date virus protection?**
- **Does your replacement cycle for computers and servers extend beyond 5 years?**
- **Do you have a regular backup schedule for critical servers and staff computers?**
- **Are you confident that your network switches, routers, and other devices are labeled, organized, and not reaching the end of their engineered life?**
- **What software support and upgrades are you paying for but not using? Why?**

Being honest with yourself about the answers today could determine whether you have an unplanned emergency or a scheduled upgrade in your next fiscal year. While the questions above are serious ones that everyone should consider as they plan their budget, your answers to these should help you start a self-assessment. Helping you decide where to go from here is where we can help. Too often, we see IT situations that are costly and very disruptive that could have been avoided if a moment was taken to plan for an upgrade or replacement.



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We encourage everyone to view and maintain your IT infrastructure just like all other tools that are vital to local governments. A computer upgrade may not generate the budget excitement that a new patrol car, bucket truck, or even new office furniture does. But, to quote one last popular adage – “Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong.” Do your part to avoid seeing this lesson in action by planning ahead with your IT budget.

If you would like help preparing your IT plans for the next fiscal year, please contact Larry Adams [ladams@sgrc.us](mailto:ladams@sgrc.us) or Chris Strom [cstrom@sgrc.us](mailto:cstrom@sgrc.us)

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## Septic Tank Repairs Available for Brooks County Residents

*Transportation and Environment: Corey Hull*

This month the Environmental department of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission installed the first of several septic system repairs in Brooks County in support of the Pride Branch 319 project. The Pride Branch 319 project is a Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) project focused on water quality and reducing contaminate loads in local streams. Qualified applicants who participate in the program receive 50% reimbursement for the repair or replacement of a failing septic system. All work is monitored by the Department of Health and must meet their regulatory standards. The only qualifying criteria is that the septic system must be failing and located in the Pride Branch watershed which encompasses the western and southern parts of Brooks County.

Fecal contamination is a leading cause of E. coli infections that is found in the watershed which can be caused by leaking and failing septic systems, non-point source pollution which is polluted runoff water, and failing sewer systems. The Pride Branch 319 project addresses all of these potential pollutants with the hope of reducing the contaminants of the Pride Branch watershed.

If you are interested in any septic replacements or repairs and are located in the Pride Branch watershed, please call Charles Nimmo ext-145 or Corey Hull ext-116 at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission’s Valdosta Office.



## **Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging Staff Hosts Senior Hunger Listening Session**

*Area Agency on Aging: Wanda Taft*

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging (AAA) hosted a Senior Hunger Listening Session at the Leroy Rogers Senior Center in Tifton on April 19. The session brought together a diverse group of representatives from various agencies across the region to discuss concerns and gather ideas about senior hunger.

The information gathered will be used to help develop a state plan to address the issue, a priority of the Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner Robyn Crittenden. According to a press release from Crittenden and the DHS, Georgia ranks in the top 10 states "in terms of food insecurity for seniors."

DHS contracted with North Highland Worldwide Consulting to lead regional listening sessions across the state. Management consultants Billy Pinkston and Terry Andrews facilitated the discussion in Tifton.

The session focused on five major topics; food waste and recovery, what today's seniors want and need, the health impact of senior hunger, options to meet the community need, and issues with access to food. Attendees openly discussed their views regarding each topic. Many explained that seniors in the region are often isolated, frail, and living alone, thus posing issues with having access to food and limited ability to prepare meals. Several participants also explained that many seniors in the area have limited income and are unable to purchase fresh produce and other healthier options. These factors, along with several others, directly impact the health of seniors in the area. Attendees explained that as a result, many of their clients are living with diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Many people are likely unaware that senior hunger and/or food insecurity is an issue in the region. "Food insecurity is a concern for many of the seniors we serve. I'm especially encouraged that the consultants are looking beyond governmental assistance programs and other traditional ways to stretch budgets. They're also asking questions to help us explore the possibility of capturing food waste, including waste at grocery stores and restaurants," said Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging Director Wanda Taft.

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Billy Pinkston yielding the floor to Sandi Newman from The Society of St. Andrews at the listening session.

*Photo by: Eve Guevara-The Tifton Gazette*

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The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's AAA develops, provides, coordinates, and advocates for services that assist older individuals, at-risk adults, persons with disabilities, their families and caregivers. For more information or to receive assistance, contact the AAA's Aging and Disability Resource Connection at 912-287-5888 or 1-888-732-4464 (1-888-73-AGING). Or visit the AAA website at [www.sgrc.us/aaa.html](http://www.sgrc.us/aaa.html).

## SGRC Loan Program Assists Winsel's Boats In Valdosta

*Loan Programs: Michelle Frey*

The Southern Georgia Area Resource Development Agency is partnering with Commercial Banking Company to assist funding a project for Winsel's Boats in South Valdosta with the help of EDA Revolving Loan Fund. Winsel Love has been in the boating business for over 35 years beginning in his dad's business, Valdosta Marine Center. He saw the business change hands several times, staying on each time with the new owners in a sales and repair capacity. He bought the business in 2009 and fittingly changed the name to "Winsel's Boats." Winsel's Boats sells new, customized, and previously owned boats and any boating accessory. They also have a service and repair department. Stop by and check out the showroom at Winsel's Boats located at 2330 U.S. Highway 41 South in Valdosta, GA.



Check out their website at: <http://winselsboats.net/>

## Pearson Senior Center Under Construction

*Community and Economic Development: Kimberly Hobbs*



Construction is underway for the new City of Pearson Senior Center. The City was awarded \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to renovate the existing 1,636 square foot facility and construct a 3,351 square foot expansion. The architect on this project is J. Glenn Gregory & Associates, Architects, located in Valdosta and the contractor is Harper Company Builders, Inc., located in Douglas. It is estimated that the construction of the renovation and expansion will be completed by September 2017.

Once completed, the senior citizens of Pearson will have a new 4,987 square foot facility with adequate space to meet their needs. The newly constructed Senior Center will include four new classrooms for smaller group activities, such as arts and crafts, exercising, computer-learning, and classroom media.

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The facility will also include ample storage, office space, large kitchen, laundry room, spacious activity room, a unisex bathroom and two, multi-occupant bathrooms.

The senior citizens are currently meeting at the Pearson Community Center, located just next door, while construction is taking place. They are able to watch the progress being made and are very excited about moving into the new facility.



### **SGRC Staff Members On The Move**



Don't be surprised if you see some of our SGRC staff members in local, state or even national news. The SGRC is proud to have staff serving in positions at the local, state and national level.

#### **Corey Hull—Transportation and Environment Director**

Corey currently serves on several local, state and national committees and boards including serving as the President of the Georgia Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) since 2015. APA is a professional association for planners of various specialties throughout the United States, with the Georgia Chapter having more than 900 members. Corey is a member of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies Standing Committee on Metropolitan Policy, Planning and Processes, and is the national co-chair of its Joint Subcommittee on Transportation in Military Communities. Corey is also a member of the Policy Committee of the National Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), a transportation advocacy organization committed to enhancing MPOs' abilities to improve metropolitan transportation systems. Corey also serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Georgia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, representing 16 MPOs throughout the state.

#### **Roberta Lovett—Workforce Development Director**

Roberta currently serves as the 2nd Vice-President for the Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA). SETA is a professional association for workforce development professionals in the Southeast Region. SETA represents eight southern states. In addition Roberta serves on the Communications Committee for the Georgia State Workforce Development Board.

#### **Wanda Taft—Area Agency on Aging Director**

Wanda currently serves as President of the Georgia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (G4A). G4A provides a venue for Georgia's twelve Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to work collectively to improve the quality of life of Georgia's senior citizens. Also, Wanda serves as G4A's representative on Georgia's newly organized Older Adults Cabinet, which is chaired by First Lady Sandra Deal and DHS Commissioner Robyn Crittenden.



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### REGIONAL CALENDAR

#### May 2017

- ⇒ 7-9 GARC Economic Development Conference, Lake Lanier
- ⇒ 11 Housing Solutions for Local Governments, Valdosta
- ⇒ 23 GARC Council Member Training, Darien
- ⇒ 25 SGRC Council Meeting, Pearson
- ⇒ 25 Regional Transportation Roundtable, Pearson

#### June 2017

- ⇒ 22 SGRC Council Meeting, Pearson
- ⇒ 23-27 GMA Annual Conference, Savannah