

INQUIRER

Intentionally Prophetic & Opinionated



FEBRUARY, 2000 • TIME TO TAKE OUR COUNTY BACK • Issue 1, Volume 1



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The Grady County Inquirer

LET CITIZEN'S OVERSIGHT GO TO BAT FOR YOUR COUNTY

We are well on our way to getting the county governments of Grady and Thomas County back into the hands of the people.

After the general election of November 7, 2000 Citizen's Oversight will be freed up to help other citizens in other counties provide oversight of their local governments.

There are two things that you can be almost certain will happen. The first is that your county commissioners not being used to citizen oversight will be threatened by your involvement in government and will be resentful.

than likely be forced to begin ousting some of them the next election. You need to get prepared now!

The second thing you will discover is that certain special interests including the local Chamber of Commerce (which receives taxpayer funding) and the local newspaper (which has a monopoly on legal advertising in the county) and the local Regional Development Center (RDC) (receives county tax monies) and others, have a very strong alliance with local government.

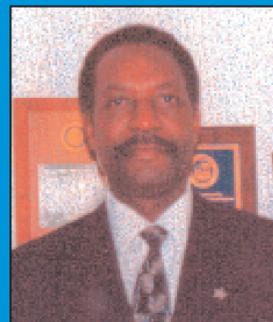
You will find out rather quickly when you begin to really work for reform and oversight of local government that you must have a voice directly to the people. The local

paper will most likely distort or shut your message out. The Cairo Messenger supports business and business control of county government.

This is where Citizen's Oversight can be of great help. We are a lean, mean, fighting machine. We are politically geared toward being a voice for those who do not presently have a voice in the community.

Overall Citizen's Oversight will try to keep citizens informed throughout Georgia. Then, when a county has an issue or issues that need to be addressed we can focus one or more issues in that county to give voice to those seeking reform. This will speed up the reform process considerably allowing the reformers to get their message directly out to the people with the message not being distorted and discredited by the other local media.

VOTE FOR ODELL JOLLY SHERIFF Grady County - 2000



Experience Counts Metropolitan Police Institute of Dade Co., Fla., the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Jackson State University, Essex County College, Alabama A&M and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. VOTE NOV. 7 2000 FOR ODELL JOLLY! Paid for by Odell Jolly Campaign

WE GET THE GOVERNMENT WE DESERVE

By Kathy Barron

For years there has been a lot of discussion about rampant government regulation. Most of this discussion has focused on state and federal government. It is time that citizens focus on the oversight and limitation of local government.

For several years I have attended Thomas County School Board meetings. More recently I have begun to attend various other government board and committee meetings. It has become obvious to me that our elected representatives are unaccustomed to being observed while in the process of making decisions.

Recently, while working in the opposition to the land use ordinance that has recently been imposed on the citizens of Thomas County, I was frequently told, "What difference does it make what I think. They are going to do what they want to do anyway."

The purpose of making the above statements is not to criticize these citizens, but to point out that we can not place all the blame on politicians when we are not fulfilling our own obligations.

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THE STATE OF THE COUNTY

I am writing this letter Dec. 27, 1999, it is meant to be prophetic and opinionated. Dear Citizens of Grady County, The Jan. 19, 1999 minutes show that Chairman Norton asked for unanimous consent for the chairmanship to rotate annually. Every man agreed to this. Norton believed that for the Chairman to serve in this capacity for more than one year was not in the best interest of citizens of Grady County.

Now it appears that Norton does not intend to honor his unanimous consent request. He wants to remain as Chairman and wants Copeland to remain as Vice - Chairman. He stated (also in the minutes) that if Grady County were selected for a state prison, we would have a referendum, let the voters decide. If Norton remains as a commissioner and/or as Chairman, Will he renege on that as well?

Copeland always nominates and re-nominates the Chairman each year. Copeland apparently is the majority leader and minority whip. Copeland will always support the Chairman on the important issues, but vote with the sheep (minority) sometimes on unimportant issues. I wanted to be Chairman and if Copeland were elected as Vice - Chairman again, I would use him for good rather than evil.

Norton will nominate Copeland as Vice - Chairman. The three vote majority will be set in concrete again, as it was during Drew's seven year Chairmanship. This is not Democracy. "It is three wolves and two sheep voting on what's for dinner." Charlie Norton now demonstrates a lack of core values. Honor is negotiable among wolves on the Grady County Commission. "Power corrupts, and it corrupts completely."

How will this rigged Democratic process hurt citi-

zens of Grady County? Burns, (ex - Savings and Loan Banker), now Realtor, and Copeland's voters are virtually all in the City of Cairo, there is no doubt in my mind that they will vote favorable to the interest of the special interests of the City of Cairo.

Norton is in business in Cairo and derives much of his business from the other businesses in Cairo. Together this three-vote majority will represent 63% of the voters of Grady County.

There is no doubt in my mind that Norton will vote with the two city commissioners when it comes to important issues like: Prison in Grady County, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPOST), Referendum issues, Subdivision and Zoning Regulations, Fire tax districts, Volunteer Firemen's Pension paid by the county, and Consolidation of City and County Government.

What; consolidation of city and county government, why?

I believe that the city of Cairo has grown itself into a crisis, and the crisis will continue growing as long as growth does not pay for itself through impact fees. Not only is growth not paying for itself, City of Cairo taxpayers are directly subsidizing Cairo business and business expansion. Now, they want county property owners to subsidize Cairo business growth as well.

The city has taxed city property owners about all it can. The published Cairo City expenditure budgets 1988 - 1998 show an increase of about 768%, while county budget grew about 100%. Business will not support impact fees on growth to relieve city property taxes because, it would slow down growth.

I believe a plan has been devised that will allow growth to continue unrestricted, at the expense of both city and county property owners. My vision tells me that county taxpayers will pay a lot more in the future.

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IS YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER PLAYING YOU FOR A FOOL

By Ed Komarek

Your local newspaper with a few notable exceptions claims to be a community newspaper serving all the people. Hopefully you know better, yet your local newspaper can manipulate your views and beliefs in ways you may not recognize and can not protect

yourself against. Are your mind and emotions really your own or are you being brainwashed and manipulated beneath your level of awareness to serve the needs of a local "elite".

A true community newspaper should, in a ideal world, be a paper that presents the views of all citizens in a coherent, clear and articulate manner. "All the

facts" are presented to the public so that the public will be "completely" informed. Then when completely informed the public can truly make up their own minds for the course of action they want to take. In contrast a political newspaper serves to present the view of only one or more segments of society. Citizen's Oversight is

such a political paper created to present the side of those wishing for government reform and an end to establishment elite control of government and the people. Because most of the so called "community newspapers" today are really political papers promoting and sustaining the corrupt status quo, it

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CYAN MAGENTA



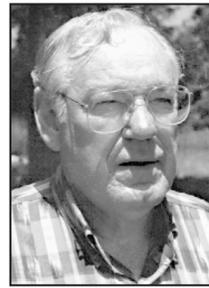
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CYAN MAGENTA

from the desk of **THE EDITOR**



When I became an active commissioner, I was appalled by the lack of accountability in the commission office itself. The administrative staff had been allowed total authority for several years. Drew, Copeland, and Burns fought and voted to allow this to continue. The two commissioners in the minority were expected to get along and go along. I felt (and I have demonstrated over 3 years) that I have a brain and had a great deal to contribute.

The Cairo messenger supported these three wolfish commissioners, because their control was threatened also, along with the Chamber. I will not extend to any special interest, any more influence in government than any ordinary citizen has.

Drew and Administrator Stephenson are gone, setting the stage to return to "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." But, that won't happen now, because Norton, in order to remain Chairman, joined the wolves by not honoring his Jan. 19, 1999 promise, by unanimous consent motion, to rotate chairmanship annually. He nominated Copeland also, for his 9th continuous year as Vice - Chairman.

Bivins Accomplishments:

- Time Clocks Sheriff & Jail, this forces accountability of overtime.
- No Radar on county roads, no county funds are expended for Radar.
- Published Agenda, published free at my request by Chronicle, Messenger refused.
- Hiring Office Mgr. for Tax Office. Tax office now staffed with competent clerks.
- Designed Forms for tax office, to require accountability and provide audit trail.
- Wrote corrective action plan for Tax Office, line item.
- Validator printers, to provide computer generated tax receipts.
- Required Auditor payments accountability of billing, and board approval of each payment.
- Required Tax Assessor to mail out a list of previous years taxable personal property.
- Post Office, "address service requested", assures the correct mailing address. In 1999, up to 10% of all tax bills were sent (three times) to incorrect addresses, causing penalties & interest to be added.
- Designed Form for Tax Assessor, taxpayer can use form to apply for relief of interest and penalties.
- Requested that state initiate address service requested status on all tax bills, statewide. Sen. Ragan.

Attempted to correct many shortcomings of county administration:

- Required county commission staff (including Attorney) to obey state open records laws.
- Reestablished Commissioners right to: Have a private office, unfettered access to all county records, keys to courthouse. Under Drew and Copeland, only they had these rights.
- Inadequate communication of board action to other constitutional offices.
- Inadequate, accurate, and complete recording of the (minutes) public record.
- Inadequate and sloppy storage and control of county records.
- Illegality of not re-electing Clerk and Attorney, both are intended by law, to be "at will" employees.
- Require Clerk to use word processor instead of a typewriter - done in 1999.
- Computerize county and other offices with windows technology, including Internet use - done.
- Improve adherence to Robert's Rules of order, required by law - not done, but still trying.
- Required Sheriff seized property inventory, required by law - done.
- Required "Records Retention Schedule" required by law, has been in progress two years, ongoing.
- Requested county records inventory - ongoing.
- Disorderly Conduct Ordinance - done.
- Road Petition and new ordinance - done.
- Private Property Ordinance - done, cannot now bury cows for ex - commissioners. Cronyism dead.
- Road inventory & database - done, development of database is ongoing.
- Annual Road priority list, done, if published annually, it will help take politics out of road paving.
- Attempted county personnel database, in the process, hanky panky was discovered in payroll.
- Finish 3rd floor 1999/2000, I requested it in 1997, this paved the way to sell the old bank building.
- State Prison Referendum, my motion for Referendum failed, but I am proud of my failures as well.
- Repeal of Subdivision Regulations - my motion failed. but I am proud I made it.
- Attempted to get some control of 911 - not successful, still trying.

ATLANTA (AP) — A panel in charge of reshaping the state's local governments is backing off a key recommendation that four of Georgia's largest counties and their primary cities consolidate.

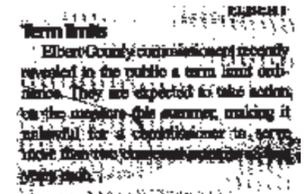
The Georgia Future Communities Commission is to present a slate of proposals to the Legislature and the governor beginning in January. One proposal it considered was consolidation of Bibb County and Macon, Chatham County and Savannah, Dougherty County and Albany, and Wilcox County and Atlanta.

Although the Legislature would have had to approve it and voters would have had the final say, the suggestion provoked a strong outcry from local officials.

The panel has now decided to put that proposal on hold, staff director Jane Massey said Wednesday.

Editor's Comments:

After reading article at left, there can be no doubt that state bureaucrats intend consolidation, based on HB 489 which is called a law, but it is not mandatory. Elbert County (below), had a problem with old, naughty Commissioners.



CITY OF WHIGHAM

Before the city elections in 1999, I made two mailings to the city voters. The first one was to encourage city residents to run for Mayor and Council. The second was a little more harsh and opinionated. I opoligize for the harshness.

The election was successful, in my opinion. There is however, a problem. The problem is that the losers will not accept the decisions of the citizens. These same losers did not accept the Mayor of the previous election, and worked, or talked against her.

Over the past two years, planning sessions ocured between sitting council members, and a pseudo city czar. During these sessions plans were made to take over the city government by three council members and Mayor Czar, who would win the election unapposed.

The new Czar Mayor and, three relected councilmembers would then look like Democratic Government, much like the Grady County Commission. "Three wolves and two sheep voting on whats for dinner." I'll bet it has never ocured to any one of these people that this is wrong.

Mayor Czar did not get elected, thats okay, he'll just find a way to run things, innovate, run the city through a puppet, and try again next election. Who is this puppet? Is he or she cunning enough to pull it off, or will the new Mayor and Council stand up, insist upon their authority, and, more important, use it. Head off trouble by firm decisive action to eliminate future trouble.



REMEMBER TO VOTE

in every Primary and then the General Election, NOVEMBER 7 - 2000 where you can then vote for the person, not the party. More on this, next edition.

MILLER COUNTIAN PUNISHED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR OPPOSING SALES TAX

By Ed Komarek

This is from the Thursday October 10 issue of the Miller County Liberal. The title of the opinion piece is, Up the Creek Without a Paddle by Terry Toole the editor of the Miller County Liberal. Both the City Council and the County Commission voted to quit printing the minutes of their meetings in the Liberal to punish Terry Toole. (Wake up folks this is why you have a manipulative washed out newspaper in your county that acts as the propaganda voice for local government and the power elite.)

Terry states, "The cost of

reporting the news gets fairly expensive when you report what is happening in a meeting or on an audit, and leaders of the city and county governments get me back by taking away the only way the people have of knowing some of what is going on. To the people of this city and county, I apologize that you have been denied the opportunity to read the minutes. Over the past month or so, the mayor and city council voted to stop paying to put the official city minutes in the local newspaper. In the next meeting of the county commissioners, they followed suit not to pay to

put their minutes in the local newspaper."

Terry continues, "Anyone who knows "ye scribe" also knows that money won't buy or political favors or pressures won't sway what I think is right for the majority of the people of this city and county." (Hot Damn, I have a real soul brother here!)

What a contrast to our local Cairo Messenger that drove through the sales tax and would not print even a letter to the editor against the tax. Regarding the sales tax Terry says, "The carrot has been put before our noses. The decision on this tax will be left to the voters.

Choose wisely; we will be paying it and much more for the next five years." If Terry Toole were editor of the Messenger the Citizens of Grady County might not have to be paying for the fiasco of a sales tax because the public would have been given "all the facts". Wait till "all the costs" come in for the excess unfilled beds for the jail and maintenance, as well as for the extra employees for the jail, (1/1/2000-that cost has soared to \$786,000)the Recreation department etc. Not to mention the frills to gain the passage of the tax like for the library which even lobbied in its

newsletter for the tax because of the candy they were getting and the city which got a bunch of streets paved.

Kudo's to you Terry! If only there were more newspaper men and women like you that had the backbone to stand up to the special interests and government. That way boondoggles and bad judgment would be exposed before the taxpayer had to pay and not after the fact as happens most of the time. This, because your local newspaper does not want to buck the system or is too lazy to dig into the matter•

PETITIONS, PETITIONS, Reprinted from 1996

By Ed Komarek

The Citizens Oversight Group of Grady County began a petition drive to hold a local referendum to throw out the current excessive and irresponsible land use regulations. George Bivins chairs that Committee. George's attempt to get a petition that would pass muster with the State of Georgia and the local probate judge has been a difficult, complicated & confusing affair for all concerned.

George was able to get 2600 signers of the petition more or less allowing for those that were not registered voters and those who signed more than once. Georgia law requires that to hold a referendum that 20% of the registered voters sign. With around 10,000 voters at the time of the petition this is enough.

THE PROBLEM:

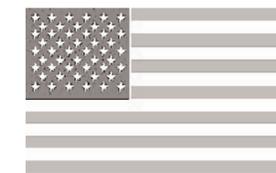
The problem that George ran into was that its not enough to have people sign a petition, the petition must stand up under State and local scrutiny in every technical detail. It must also stand up under the local and State court system. Attorney General Bowers and the local

probate judge were able to give opinions on the legality of the various incarnations of the petition submitted to them by George. The problem is that this can go on forever around and around. (George in frustration finally gave up and just used them to petition the local Commissioners who of course wanted to pass away this hot potato. All George was asking was for them to accept it as a general petition under the U. S. Constitution First Amendment. It seems that several powerful people in the County hold more power with the local Commission than 2600 ordinary folks.)

THE SOLUTION:

It is clear that what all the counties in Georgia need is a simple preapproved petition that passes muster with all authorities. (I hoped I would not have to get involved in this project but it seems I must.) I first got a okay from George to get involved as this has been his pet project. Next I called the local Probate Judge Ann Edwards and I discussed this idea of a preap-

proved petition with her. She told me that she has preapproved petitions in her office. One for example is a preapproved petition to remove a public official from office. She says this one may be a hundred years old. If there is a preapproved citizens petition to remove an official from office, then why not a preapproved citizens petition to remove an offending ordinance, regulation, or act on either a local or State level. Ann tells me that to get a petition preapproved it must go through the General Assembly and I suppose signed by the Governor. Ah, Ha here we get into politics. Ann says that ones local representative is the one to introduce legislation. To date, 1/13.2000 no word on petitions, I will revive this issue in January or Feb. 2000•



continued from page 1 NEWSPAPER PLAYING YOU FOR A FOOL

was necessary to create Citizen's Oversight to present the side of the story being suppressed and distorted. And believe you me we have had plenty of experience with our local papers in Grady County distorting and suppressing our message.

Those of us that have begun to take our citizenship seriously in the American Republic have become increasingly aware of how the press manipulates public opinion. Southwest Georgia is no exception. Most every county in Georgia has a small weekly newspaper as well as a larger regional daily covering their area. Most of these newspapers have a monopoly on the local county and city legal ad's and rely to a large degree on the local taxpayer monies to keep them in business. The private ad space is often taken up by those business that are a part of the local established political and financial order. These businesses in turn get all kinds of taxpayer benefits from local government through such agencies as the Industrial Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, etc. In Grady county its been fun to watch all the scrapping between private business for tax breaks and government funds as three County authorities merge.

Political papers like your local paper can manipulate you both overtly and covertly. Most so called community newspapers covertly advocate positions by acting in an intellectually dishonest manner. The reason for this is that the reader will not know they are being manipulated and so cannot defend themselves against the psychological attack. Yes we are talking psychological warfare folks. How can you defend against attack when you don't even know your are being attacked. So the first step in a defense is to become aware you are under attack. Boy do I have experience in this area as I seek to inform the public.

Back here locally, when Citizen's Oversight goes on the attack against the local status quo and the local power elite, local government begins to crumble under the light of public exposure. One of the things that happens is that the local newspaper as it fights back for the establishment gets its own secret agenda exposed and is shown to be a political paper not representing all the community. At some point the paper will have to either develop toward a true community newspaper or overtly admit to being a political paper and its own dishonesty•

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The Riverbank

PHILOSOPHER

ON THE RIVERBANK
By Walter Lewis

LAWS & RULES

I just got through reading the personal and political attack upon Mr. George Bivins, that was masqueraded out in the South Georgia Chronicle as an editorial. I have no problem with someone taking issue with a candidate on issues, fitness to serve, character, or philosophy. I do have a problem with someone who creates an issue that is a non-issue and tries to turn that issue around to use it against someone.

The Chronicle took Mr. Bivins' right to create a covenant on his own land, which is done all the time and tried to apply that example of private agreement between two parties, as if there is no difference between that and government regulations without owner or buyer consent.

The Chronicle through its ignorance and bias of the differences between private property rights and government land use and control regulations, tried to mash peaches for public consumption and then to sell that at their lemonade stand as the real thing. The facts are that George Bivin's owns property, and chose to sell some of it, if some buyer would buy it. Mr. Bivins

decided to set forth some criteria, upon which a buyer must abide, if the buyer chose to purchase the land he had to sell. Such criteria are common on small rural plots of land and in the City. The Country Club area and most subdivisions in Cairo, and Grady County for years have had can do's and don't's on the type of house in size, price, etc., that is allowed. I can buy a lot at the Country Club, and it will be mine, but what I do with that lot must be in accord with the other people who have done the same thing. It is a kind of trust, held among all parties, that a new buyer must contract to follow for the mutual benefit of all.

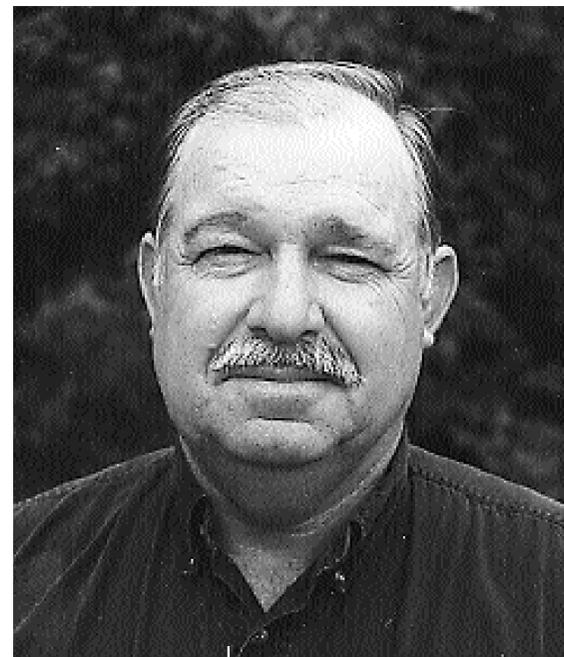
Land use and control regulations are the brain child of government bureaucrats that effect buyers, sellers, owners and they effect all unincorporated areas, and no one has agreed to anything. Government land use and subdivision regulations are issued out, not agreed to, and it is this one sided determination of Big Brother, that I believe corrupts potentially our American way of life. George Bivins believes this also.

A covenant such as Mr. Bivins required on the land he sold, was nothing more than the

parties agreeing to regulate themselves to that standard of activity that protects each participant. If you join a club, you must meet certain criteria for that membership. If you join the Army, if you become a new American citizen, if you become a Church member you should be a Christian first. We all agree to do, be, or to become something, if we desire to attain.

Private property agreements only effect those who mutually agree, while government with its current attitude in Grady County Georgia and America, seems to act in ways that controls citizen's activities, and makes war on personal freedom. The bottom line for government infringement into private areas or human endeavor, is that all government, once it reaches a certain level of power, changes into a new and hard to explain animal that acts with greed and all other failures that affect the people themselves. The difference of course, is that government being able to have human weaknesses for itself, is the path to tyranny for all those who are under such a government.

The rule of law protects people from government tyranny, while rules allow whoever is in power to rule as the law. The prob-



lem with rules that are used as laws over people is that the rulers place themselves and not the rule they make as the absolute authority.

If you read the rules and regulations book of Grady County, that covers land use and controls etc., you will find that the politicians reserve for themselves final and absolute power to interpret their rules any way they choose. Why don't they write clear

rules and regulations so that everyone can understand them and then give the rules the authority such as a law has, and remove the political right of interpretation? Rules are created for the benefit of rulers, while laws are created for the benefit of the people. We are losing our freedom and rights at the local level because we don't know the difference.

GIVE 'EM HELL GEORGE FACES CHARGES OF SIMPLE BATTERY, BLAH, BLAH

Rember those headlines? They were both pre - election. The purpose of course, is to damage me politically. To paint me as an uncontrolled person, why? Because I oppose land regulations (subdivision and zoning) that must be in place before they can call for referendum on consolidation of city and county government. Without consolidation they cannot soak county property owners with the cost of continued growth of business in the City of Cairo.

I will be 66 years old come June 2000. I was an Airline pilot for 30 years. Can you imagine an airline pilot, who had to take a physical (including psychological), and a flight test of knowledge and skill every 6 months, being "out of control?" In my career, I never injured a passenger, never damaged an airplane

As to the charge of weapon in federal building, that was an out and out lie. If I had done that, I would still be in jail, probably.

As to the charge of simple battery, the judge has not ruled yet. The following is the

story of the charge of Simple Battery:
Sunday January 9, about 10:30 AM. This is the day I wish I had not layed out of Church. My excuse is that I was busy learning the software, so that I could design and write this paper.

What the Messenger and the Times forgot to investigate, was that this man had been recently charged with Terroristic Threats." On 11/8/99 he had pulled a shotgun out of his car and threatened to kill this young black man who had bought a used car from him. All they had to do was ask the Whigham Police about any past history. But a sitting commissioner is hotter news.

I went to the new Gator's Store and parked facing the store in the most left parking space, went in to buy tobacco, then out to refuel my pickup.

Coming out of the store I saw this man standing by his car, who looked familiar, so I said hi. He started right in with the comment about resigning as commissioner. I commented on that. Then, he said you SOB,

you put Cox Road on the paving list ahead of Mobley Road. I replied, man them's fighting words. We should not be talking about this, it is county commission business. I turned and walked to my pickup, cranked up and backed out to line up with the pumps.

I noticed that all the time I was moving, he was walking towards me. I stopped, he stopped at my window, and continued harassing me. I said, you are spoiling for a fight. He touched my arm and said, come on, get out, so I did. He grabbed my left arm. I do not remember punching him, more likely he was bruised by my hand or elbow as I instinctly sought to get loose.

I could just as well have filed charges as he did. He however, had a witness who said she saw me punch him, then later said she saw my arm come back, but did not see the punch land.

Since this man uttered fighting words and pursued me, possibly stalked me, there is no doubt in my mind, that this incident was pre - planned.

CITY OF CAIRO VOTERS VS COUNTY VOTERS

By George Bivins - 1996
No board of County Commissioners should ever pass any regulation that effects the lives of citizens to this extent, without benefit of referendum.

I was speaking of land regulations and issues like consolidation of schools, and State Prisons in Grady County.

Norton, Copeland, and Burns voted no, when I brought the motion to schedule referendum on the State Prison question.

What is wrong with letting the voters have a say in this important issue? What would have been wrong with letting the voters vote on consolidation of Whigham High School? I'll tell you why; the voters would not have passed it and special interests knew it.

Norton seconded and voted for my motion to repeal subdivision regulations in 1997. Will he vote again to repeal subdivision regulations?

Will Norton vote against Zoning Regulations that are sure to be brought up soon by the city commissioners Burns

or Copeland?
Has Norton forgotten that he represents C O U N T Y folks? Is Norton aware that the special interests of Cairo are headed for consolidation of city and county governments, so as to raid C O U N T Y folks pocket books? That all he has to do is look at what has happened to Thomas County since I wrote the original article in 1996.

Thomas County is now fully regulated, Subdivision, Zoning, and Fire Taxing Districts. They are actively talking about consolidation of police and of the governments.

Thomasville Enterprise also started brainwashing the city residents that the county was double taxing them. They are coming after C O U N T Y property owners.

The one issue that helped me win election as commissioner in 1996, was that my incumbent opposition made the motion to cancel Prison Referendum.

No commissioner should ever vote against, in any manner, a method by which his people can have a say in it's own government.

Sholar expects education as main session topic

By REX SANDERS
Special Writer

District 179 Rep. Wallace Sholar, (D-Cairo) said this week he believes the governor's education reform report will be the biggest item in this year's session of the Georgia General Assembly. This year's session begins in Atlanta on Monday.

"I think he's (the governor) heavy on accountability," said Sholar, beginning his second session. "Funding may come up, a different way to divide the money, some sort of equalization of funding."

Sholar said he feels accountability should start on the local

level.
"I think we all have to account to someone. Sometimes we don't have the right evaluation process at the local level. We need to evaluate more on the local level. I think that would help a lot," he said.

On the issue of funding, Sholar said it's going to be hard to shift funds from the more affluent counties to the less affluent counties.

"But if we're going to have one Georgia, we need to be able to share the wealth of the richer counties," Sholar continued. "A lot of tax dollars have been spent in Atlanta that the smaller counties

generated. It's going to have to be a give and take situation between the two factions."

On other issues expected to come up in this year's session, Sholar said he doesn't think the issue of required green space will have any affect on south Georgia.

"Here again, I think we might look at it on a local or district basis, but I don't think we need it right now," he said.

In regards to the division of the anticipated tobacco settlement, Sholar said health was the reason for the lawsuit.

"Health is what it was all about, but we need to look at the split," Sholar said.

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The Citizen's Oversight READER'S

THOMAS COUNTY

CITIZEN'S RIGHTS, NOT A BLACK OR WHITE ISSUE

By Dolly Graham

After reading Lane Waldrop's letter to the editor in the last issue of Citizen's Oversight, I have to agree that he is right. This election is about citizen's private property rights.

My family and I know what it means to have your property taken away from you in order to serve the purposes of someone else with political

power and influence. This all in the name of progress.

Check my street, Hadley Drive and see what happened to my neighborhood. I agree with Lane. I won't vote for a brother that voted to take my property rights away from me to serve a powerful few.

When I think of the fact that six Thomas County Commissioners passed this new land use standard with three black votes and three

white votes I wonder if they were brainwashed.

No, this election is not about black and white its about your property rights.

On November 5 vote for the candidates who will fight for your property rights. Scott Waldrep District 2, Calvin Cannon District 8 & Rickey Smith District 4. 1/25/2000 Editor's Note Their efforts failed, God bless them for their courage.

GRADY COUNTY

ABOLISH ALL BUILDING CODES & LAND USE REGULATIONS

Dear Editor:

I feel that all building codes and land use regulations in Grady County should be abolished. Larry Ivy and Mike Stephenson should be fired. Furthermore I intend to vote against incumbent Commissioners in my district until these codes and restrictions are overturned.

If these codes and land use regulations had been voted in by the citizens of Grady County and administered by reasonable people, we would not have the problems we have at this time. Here is just a

example of how injurious these excessive and irresponsible regulations really are.

About three years ago my son moved a double wide mobile home from Worth County to Grady County. Five permits and \$4600.00 later the job was completed and my son and his family moved in. I have never in my life seen so many stupid self imposed rules by Larry Ivy that he has stated are in the Southern Code.

Remember this double wide was less than a year old and had been set up and occupied in Worth County,

meeting all their regulations. I have one question for the County Commissioners of Grady County that continue to impose these rules on the citizens. Do you think that a young couple with children in school can afford \$4600.00 to move and set up their mobile home?

I am having my name with held by the editor of Citizen's Oversight but those involved in this will know who I am as does the Editor.

Grady County Businessman

State Of The County - continued

wage jobs.

What can you do to head off consolidation of city and county government, prevent a state prison in Grady County? **Throw a wolf out of office when he comes up for re-election.** Elect retirees and farmer/property owners to the Grady County Commission who have core traditional American values, who will not forget that it was C O U N T Y people who put him in office.

As you may recall, in 1996 I wrote letters to citizens of District 3, Duncanville, Higdon, Ragan, and Midway, urging you to support Norton. It hurts me to urge you to reconsider. Things change, people change. George Bivins 1/6/2000

It now seems that my prophesy 12/27/99 was right on target. January 4, 2000, Norton decided that he would not honor his unanimous consent motion of Jan. 19, 1999 where all 5 commissioners agreed that the chairman would rotate annually. Copeland nominated Norton for chairman, dishonoring his own vote to rotate chair, and Norton nominated Copeland for Vice - Chairman, as I predicted. Burns said he did not remember the issue coming up at all. Not surprising. But, it is a matter of record.

In other words, I think they had been influenced by special interests. I do not know what the coin was, appointment to bank board, more business, country club social status, but there is one thing for sure, it was not idealism, and it was not what is best for citizens of Grady County. More likely, it was what is best for business.

There was a time in Grady County when if you wanted a job or a bank loan you had to buy a new Ford, since the banker owned the Ford Dealership. There is very little difference today, just more subtle.

My prophecy was on target in another way. Read the January 5 Cairo Messenger - Banner, by Randolph Wind:

Item 2 - "An earnest and exhaustive study into consolidation of government in Grady County by community leaders and not just politicians or public servants."

The Messenger believes that community leaders (businessmen) should have equal status with your elected officials, to decide what is best for you. Why does the Messenger believe this? Well, it is very simple. The Messenger's income from selling papers is about \$130,000 per year. That will not even pay for the front office staff. They make their money on business advertising therefore, they represent business interest. Who are these community leaders? Do they have names?

There are about 4500 taxable properties in the City of Cairo, and about 6500 taxable properties in the county. They are coming after farmland and county property taxes to support continued growth in the City of Cairo. Consolidation will make it possible. Referendum will be required to consolidate, but if you do not think Cairo Voters can vote it in, you are mistaken. Remember the sales tax to build jail. It passed by only 500 votes. City voters did it. Consolidation brainwashing of Cairo voters began about 2 years ago. The brainwashing slogan: "city property owners are being double taxed."

Item 3 - "Implementation of county zoning as soon as reasonably possible to prevent any further deterioration of unincorporated areas."

Referendum is not required to pass zoning. You did not have a choice on subdivision regulations; you will not have a choice on zoning. All you will get is a public hearing - means nothing, total BS.

You can expect attempts soon to implement zoning regulations in Grady County. It must be done while the three wolves, Norton, Burns and Copeland are in the majority on the board of commissioners. Hopefully, the writing of this letter will slow it down.

The Rights of LAND OWNERS

GRADY COUNTY

State of The County - from page 4

Why are zoning regulations on our farms and county properties necessary? Because it paves the way for consolidation of city and county governments. City and County Regulations must be about the same, well before a consolidation referendum, otherwise the voters would have to swallow consolidation and more regulation of their land at the same time. The referendum would likely fail.

Remember that these utopians, (special interests) are not in a hurry. They realize that they must herd the sheep slowly, otherwise, they (the voters) will bolt.

About two years ago Thomas County completed total regulation of every square inch of land, subdivision, zoning, and Fire Taxing Districts. Already Thomasville Times is talking consolidation, first of police forces, then consolidate the governments. Read articles in January 23, 2000. They are coming after county property taxes. Believe it.

In 1995 the City of Augusta Georgia and Richmond County dissolved their Charters, effective January 1, 1996. The City Council held it's first meeting in 1798 when John Adams was President. At the last city meeting in 1995 the city council voted to give each councilman a \$37,000 per year pension, effective in 26 days. Corruption had already started.

The present Grady County Commission is in violation of several laws. Violation of the Georgia Constitution is the most serious in my view. A violation that changed the "Form" of county governing authority. By changing the "at will" status of the County Clerk.

This removed her from the direct authority of the Board of Commissioners. Gave her merit system protections. She could not be terminated from the Clerk Capacity at the will of the Commissioners, without exposing the county to wrongful termination lawsuit. This freed her up so that she could discriminate against the minority commissioners, causing polarization and dissension among the board members. This County Clerk situation is the reason there will never be peace on the board, or efficient, Democratic county government.

The 3 wolves want to keep her because she helps them stay in control. So, it is not 3 to 2, it is 4, sometimes 5 to two. This is not in the interest of the citizens. This situation must be corrected. County Clerk should not have power over commissioners, however subtle.

Save Money on your County Taxes

By George Bivins

Many Grady County property owners are failing to take advantage of all the ways to save money on their auto tag, county and school taxes.

Property owners small and large who farm in any commercial way, can save 25% on their property tax bill by applying with Tax Assessor for PREFERENTIAL AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT. You must apply by **April 1**. Be prepared to commit to a ten year contract. You must learn the penalties for breaking the contract. Also, penalties and interest can be saved on property and other tax bills, by simply learning a few cutoff dates.

Auto Tag - by 5 PM on your birthday
Late payment penalty is 10% of car taxes, plus 25% of the tag, plus \$1.

MH on rented lot, pay by May 1

Late payment penalty is 10% of the bill
You will get a new sticker

MH on your lot, payment is due Dec 20, the MH tax is included in with the property tax bill. The sticker is included. See Real Property penalty.

Real Property (land & home)

Pay by Dec. 20

Late payment penalty is 1% per month until paid
Plus after 90 days extra 10% plus \$20 levy.

I have passed into law that Tax Assessor will send a list of personal property that you were taxed on in previous year.

If there is an item that you sold **before Jan. 1**, you must list it as sold on the State Form that is also mailed to you by Tax Assessor. This State Form must be mailed back **before April 1**, otherwise you must pay taxes on property you no longer own. Please, never ignore any tax mail that you receive. Take care of it immediately.

The attitude of Tax Commissioner, and Tax Assessor personnel is that citizens are supposed to know the cutoff dates and that it is citizen's responsibility to keep them advised of address change. My own attitude is that if we want to be public servants then, we must be willing to accept fully the responsibility of keeping the public aware of these dates and of sending the mail to the correct address on the first mailout. At my request, the board of commissioners has approved changes that will stop so much penalty & interest charges to taxpayers.

Please, do yourself a favor, clip the above cutoff dates, and tape to your fridge.

Editorial

Cairo
Messenger

A suggested change that is both timely and appropriate

Governments, like individuals, businesses, organizations and all other segments of society have to "roll with the punches" and we consider Commissioner George Bivins' effort to update the county's process for obtaining road improvement rights-of-way to be just that — a reaction to changed conditions that must be dealt with.

At present, the county commission is responding to road paving requests about as they have been responded to by many previous commissioners. A few residents along a dirt road request paving — more often than not after a prolonged rainy spell. The county's response is to provide them with a petition sheet and instructions to get the signatures of other residents on the road. If petition forms with signatures are returned, the petitioners may, or may not, be given a commitment for action and the form is filed for future consideration, which it may, or may not get.

This is not intended as criticism of the county commission. We are well aware that they have their hands full "rolling with a variety of punches" that constantly come their way from their constituencies, state and federal governments and new rules and regulations they never dreamed they would have to deal with.

It is, however, intended to point out that "how it's always been done" doesn't fit today's conditions when it comes to obtaining land for rights-of-way. For instance, not too many years ago, rural land owners would gladly give whatever land was needed to get a road paved because dirt was cheap and the mud and dust were deep. Most

tracts of rural property were occupied by their owners and the turnover of ownership was infrequent. Most of it, too, was in farm-size tracts with a single owner and little of the subdividing into smaller residential tracts that has become so routine in the past decade or so.

The road improvement petition form Commissioner Bivins is proposing and its associated contract for providing right-of way to make that improvement possible recognizes that a new set of conditions exists — land is much more valuable; ownership now changes frequently; more people own frontage along individual roads; and some property owners had rather put up with occasional bad conditions on dirt roads to be able to maintain the "ruralness" of their environment.

The form makes the process of improving roads more businesslike by requiring commitments from those who request the investment of taxpayer funds (recently increased by the change in surveying responsibility) needed to make those improvements. It makes an effort to bind future owners to this commitment and makes those seeking pavement of county roads aware that it takes several years to bring such projects to fruition.

Some amendments will likely be suggested as commissioners go about the legislative process of refining Commissioner Bivins' proposal. We hope that in the end, however, its basic tenets will become the rules for facilitating the county's road improvement projects because they aptly address a situation that needs addressing.

YELLOW
BLACK



CYAN
MAGENTA

YELLOW
BLACK



CYAN
MAGENTA