

Commissioner Questions August 20 2014

Q. Your Road Dept. was cleaning out a ditch close to my home and caused a problem in the neighborhood. It does not look good because there is just bare dirt showing. Why is it necessary to mess up the side of the roads?

A. I am very sorry for the problems but any time this special road crew is working, there are some complaints. Each year the shoulders and ditches of the roads build up with silt and debris that the grass catches before it reaches the road surface, which is good. But when we have had so many heavy rains in the past couple of years, the edge of the pavement and ditch line will build up to the point that the grass and silt will prevent the water from draining off the shoulder of the road surfaces and also stop up culverts. Not only can this cause ponding of water on the edge of the highway and potential hydroplaning of your automobile, but it can cause BLACK ICE on the roadway in the winter.

So while this cleaning process is a pain and sometimes they will hit a cable or water line if it is too close to the surface, this is a necessary process to make our roadways safer. The ditch or edge of road may temporarily look bad until the grass seed is sowed and comes up, but eventually it will not be that noticeable. Above all, it will make our roadways safer, and in the end, that has to be our number one priority.

Q. We saw a traffic counter on the roadway approaching the Farmers Market at the Green Bean Festival. What were the results of that traffic count?

A. We asked GDOT and they willingly agreed to not only let us borrow the traffic counters but delivered them, installed them, read the data, sent us the report, and then came and picked them up. We appreciate their cooperation and assistance very much. The traffic count on Saturday, July 26 from 4:00 AM till 5:00 PM was 1,902 vehicles. We used the average number of three people per vehicle as many vehicles in attendance were vans and SUV's with much larger loads of people. The estimated attendance was 5,700 people attending the Green Bean Festival. That was a heck of a crowd.

Q. We loved the tomato sandwich day at the Farmers Market and wonder if you know how many sandwiches were made?

A. The volunteers were incredible as they worked for hours steadily making the sandwiches and the public kept eating them. Logan Turnpike Mills donated 65 loaves of delicious, homemade bread and two vendors donated over 500 tomatoes (7 M Farms and Dean Smith Farms). The sandwiches were cut in half and approximately 800 people were served. Thanks to everyone for the extremely successful event and if you did not get a sandwich, you really missed something delicious.

Q. You wrote about the new Northshore Development on the Pat Colwell Rd. in your Q & A a couple of weeks ago. Someone told me that you have a financial interest in this development. Is that true?

A. Rumors never cease to amaze me. That is completely false. I have met the developer one time in person, but that is a long way from a partnership. I have a more than full time job as commissioner and do not have the time, or interest to be getting in the real estate business.

Q. Does the county government work with the Northshore Development located on the Pat Colwell Highway?

A. Of course we do. They have now taken several distressed developments within the county that were repossessed and bank owned, and redeveloped them and had several public sales over the past few years. On this particular tract they recently developed, they are responsible for raising the tax values of these properties by hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars. The most recent sales event they conducted took property valued at around \$4,000 per acre and lots were sold for probably an average of \$ 30,000. They must have soil and erosion development permits and building permits. In addition, they post a cash bond with the county to assure the purchasers that the water and power lines will be installed immediately after the property sales.

The developers are building high quality, private paved roads that the county will not have to deal with in the future. While I know some of the truck traffic has been a burden for those living in the area, these are all local truck owners and haulers who have not had this much work in years. Almost all of the construction people are also local, and we know how negatively their business has been impacted because of the poor economy for the past few years. This project has given an economic boost to the area.

Q. Will the truck traffic using the Pat Colwell Road have a negative impact on the county roads?

A. I am sure there will be some impact on the road from that much truck traffic, but we have no way to prevent this traffic. We have urged them to drive slower and the Sheriff's Dept will also be keeping an eye on them to make sure they are driving safely and within the posted speed limits.

Q. Will there be more real estate development in this area of the county along the Pat Colwell Rd?

A. I am sure there will be. This company has developed and sold about 400 of the 1400 acres they purchased, leaving about 1000 acres undeveloped. The Building and Development office has not received any new plans yet, so we are not yet aware of when they will begin construction of their next phase. However, traditionally they do not hold on to their property very long prior to developing it.