

Questions July 23, 2014

Q. I have witnessed a near collision at the Wal-Mart intersection off 515. What can be done to make this intersection safer?

A. We have had several reports from people about this intersection being dangerous (this is not the main intersection access at the red light but the first entrance as you approach from Blairsville) so we requested an accident report from GDOT. According to the report there have been 34 accidents at this location from 2009 through 2013. There were 18 injuries but no fatalities.

Q. What exactly seems to be the problem at the Wal-Mart entrance?

A. Several of us from the Road Dept. went out to take a long look at the site to see what the issue is. The problem seems to be when you are exiting Wal-Mart onto Hwy 515 and reach the stop bar, and if and only if there are at least two vehicles in the turn lane to your left approaching from Blairsville, it is almost impossible to see traffic on Hwy 515 approaching from the east. The accidents seem to be happening because of this loss of visibility down the highway. Again, if there is no one at or near the turn lane, it is not a problem, but when the turn lane is backed up at all, the problem is severe. We highly recommend no one pull out onto Hwy 515 if there is a car in the turn lane coming from Blairsville.

Q. Do you have any ideas on what can be done to correct this?

A. If the turn lane can be moved more toward the Wal-Mart store either a ½ lane or full lane width, and then the hashed lines re-marked so as to keep cars out of the existing turn lane, visibility will be enhanced and hopefully making this intersection much safer and eliminate the call for a red light.

Q. Whose responsibility is it to make improvements to this intersection?

A. It would be the responsibility of the Georgia Department of Transportation as Hwy. 515 is a state highway. I have already corresponded with the District Engineer for our area about this problem and they may have other ideas to make it safer, but I am confident that they will look it over carefully. However, it will take time and lots of money to make an improvement. Again, it is only a problem when there is a car in the turn lane approaching from Blairsville.

Q. I heard that you are going to be restoring the old cemetery that is behind the Board of Education and near the old Cannery. Can you tell us more about that?

A. Yes, this is a project that the city, county, Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Union County Historical Society, and some interested citizens are undertaking. For years this cemetery has been pretty much neglected except for keeping the grass cut. Many of the markers are badly in need of some tender loving care. It is called the Old Blairsville Cemetery and there are 37 graves with inscribed headstones and legible names and dates and over 50 unmarked graves. The oldest grave that has a legible inscription is that of Sara Addington who died in 1844.

Q. What is involved in restoring a cemetery?

A. This is not a project to be taken lightly. We want to make sure we are doing everything correctly so we will be doing research and getting advice on how to proceed. We have someone coming up next week who has worked at a Gainesville cemetery for 15 years to look at the cemetery and advise us of how to proceed.

Q. Will there be fundraising involved with this project?

A. Yes, there will be. Once we have a plan of action and can narrow down the cost, the fundraising effort will begin. One final part will be to construct a historic fence or replica around as much of the cemetery as possible. This will probably be the most expensive part of the project. We will be contacting ancestors of those buried in the cemetery that we can locate and also hope members of the public will take an interest. There are 7 confederate soldier graves that are already identified. This will be an exciting project and more information will be forthcoming. If you are interested in donating now, you can contact City Hall until we have a bank account set up, at 706 745-2000.