

Q & A for December 24, 2014

Q. What do you consider some of the highlights of 2014 in Union County?

A. 2014 was a very good year. Number one, the national economy started to make a comeback with new job numbers, continued lowering of the unemployment rate and stock market numbers at an all-time high at least gives us encouragement that the economy is rebounding. Locally, our Farmers Market was once again hugely successful, as well as the cannery. We finished building a new addition to the market with 23 new spaces which promptly filled with vendors. We moved a food concession in at the market and began having a food vendor and the canning plant broke all of its previous records. Large crowds in the thousands attended each week so it could not have been a better season.

Q. Were there other successes?

A. Absolutely. The Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center, managed and operated by the Byron Herbert Reece Society, had another good year with many community events and improvements made during the year. At Meeks Park, we completed a new entrance off the old Blue Ridge Hwy. near the Nottely River bridge and we are currently in the process of completing a kayak/canoe launch at the river along with a new, shorter, walking trail with convenient access. We are also working on the restoration/reconstruction of the old Tate Grist Mill at the Park. We had the first baseball season with the new grassed infields in the three upper ball fields.

Q. Were all of these projects done with SPLOST money?

A. Yes. In addition to the projects listed above we have also completed the following with SPLOST funds.

- Purchased the gun range property along Hwy 515 and are in the design stages
- Started amphitheater design
- Renovations at the old nursing home building
- Purchased property above the Byron Herbert Reece Heritage Center
- Purchased property near the Horse Arena to be eventually used as a trash "convenience center"
- Installed courthouse security equipment
- Paved roads with LMIG money help
- Began work with a GDOT Off-System Safety Improvement grant updating some road signs and striping to new safety standards. In addition, many other miles of striping were completed.

Q. Do you have a road report for 2014?

A. Yes, we have gotten a report from the Road Dept. on roads either paved with asphalt or surface treatment. If you are unfamiliar with the difference, surface treatment means the road was paved with a combination of tar and gravel which is less expensive but has a rougher surface. However, it holds up as well as asphalt. The number of roads surface treated in 2014 was eleven for a total cost of approximately \$232,000. The number of roads with all or a portion of the road paved with asphalt was seven for an approximate cost of \$725,000. 42 culverts were replaced for a cost of \$47,350 which does not include any labor cost.

Q. What are your final thoughts on 2014?

A. I am very proud of our community and all the people who work hard to make it a great place to live. I am especially proud of our county employees who go above and beyond what is expected of them. Also, we are thankful for our volunteers who give so freely of their time and talents. After watching the news about other communities experiencing horrific weather and destruction, unrest and even violence, I feel so blessed to live in beautiful Union County. Certainly we cannot ignore the less fortunate among us, but our community seems to always rise to the occasion to help those in need. We can all continue to work together to make things better. I wish for each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.