

# Banks County News

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## Three seats to be on Lula ballot

By SHERRY LEWIS

The City of Lula has three slots up for grabs in the November election. Current Mayor Jim Grier is up for re-election.

Before taking office, Grier served as the chairman of Lula's Downtown Development Authority for seven years. During that time, he led the effort to gain input from citizens and business owners to develop a vision and goals for the Downtown area of Lula.

Also up for re-election is District 2 council member Marvin Moore. He has been on the council since 2015, and he serves on the Finance Committee, the Downtown Beautification and Redevelopment Committee and the Zoning and Planning Committee.

District 3 council seat, currently held by Mordecai Wilson, will be on the ballot as well. He has served on the Lula City Council for 19 years, and has already announced that he will seek re-election. Wilson is one of the oldest serving council members in the State of Georgia. As a Council Member, Wilson serves as Council liaison to four city committees: Utilities Committee, Public Safety Committee, Human Resources Committee and Zoning and Planning.

Qualifying for these positions will be on August 16-August 18 during the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

## Open house coming up at county schools

The open house schedule for the Banks County schools has been announced:

- Banks County Primary School, Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2 to 4 p.m.
- Banks County Elementary School, Wednesday, Aug. 4, 3 to 5 p.m.
- Banks County Middle School, Wednesday, Aug. 4, 4 to 6 p.m.
- Banks County High School, Thursday, Aug. 5, 3 to 5 p.m.
- Banks County High School, Freshman Pounce, Tuesday, Aug. 3, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.



Public utilities director Horace Gee presents plans for a water line relocation to the Banks County Board of Commissioners.

Photo by Angela Gary

## BOC approves Griffin Brothers for water line relocation project

By ANGELA GARY  
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The Georgia Department of Transportation's project to replace the Hwy. 59 bridge has resulted in the county relocating water lines in the area.

The Banks County Board of Commissioners approved a \$359,354 bid when it met Tuesday night, July 13, from Griffin Brothers to remove the water lines in the path of this project. The county received four bids for this project with Griffin Brothers being the lowest bid.

There will be 2,700 feet of water lines that must be relocated along Hwy. 59 and Hwy. 63.

In addition to replacing the bridge, the DOT is also installing a round-about.

The new bridge will be a little wider and 13 feet closer to I-85.

In other business at the July 13 meeting, the BOC:

- approved naming the

road in the Banks 59 Business Park Hatchery Way.

- approved the fiscal year 2022 state prison work detail contract. There is no work detail in the county now due to COVID-19, however, the contract was approved so that a detail can return to the county when restrictions in place due to the pandemic are lifted.

- approved the pre-trial intervention and diversion program contract with CSRA Probation Services Inc. The company provides probation services to the county. There is no cost to the county for this program. All fees are paid by the defendants.

- approved the annual contract with Legacy Link, which provides services at the county's senior citizen's center.

- approved a contract with Fractal SAAS Inc., to handle vegetation burn permits for the county. The state no

longer issues these permits. Fire chief Steve Nichols said county residents can apply for vegetative burn permits from this company by calling, online or through an app.

- approved a resolution establishing a county recreation board and appointed the following to serve: Kalesha Beasley, Major Hunter and Matthew Poole, all three year terms; Ashley Hancock and Christopher Heath, both two year terms; and Christopher Baker and John Riley, both one year terms.

- reviewed the subdivision regulations line-by-line. Some changes made include requiring road studies for property subdivided into five or more lots; maintaining dedicated roads with 150 feet of right-of-way; and no more than 75 lots in a subdivided piece of property can be dependent on a single road for access/exit.

## Homer lists plans for SPLOST revenue

### Fire services, water/sewer improvements named

By SHERRY LEWIS

A new fire department, fire truck and water and sewer improvements. These are some of the projects the City of Homer would fund with revenue from a special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST), if voters approve the one-cent tax in November.

At the city council meeting Tuesday night, the Homer City Council approved an intergovernmental agreement with Banks County to proceed with the 2022 Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST).

Mayor Doug Cheek said the city would receive just over \$1 million dollars in the five-year agreement.

Fire Department construction, a fire truck, and equipment are projected to cost \$558,000.

The council would spend \$223,200 on water and sewer improvements. Cheek said city engineers are already designing some water lines in the city.

Other plans include improvements to streets and to purchase street equipment, while a new public works building is planned as well.

The one-cent SPLOST will be on the ballot in November for voters to decide on.

### OTHER BUSINESS

In other business at the meeting on Tuesday, July

13, the city council:

- approved a \$541,500 budget for fiscal year 2021-2022, which is the same as last year's budget. Some changes in this year's budget include increases in administrative salaries from \$93,000 to \$96,000. Funding for the library will increase from \$30,000 to \$32,000.

- approved a zoning request and set back variance for Tony and Amanda Bedford. The couple purchased a one-acre lot on Sycamore Street. The council approved the zoning request to Community Business District. Also, the council approved a setback variance from 75 to 50 feet. Council members agreed that that is necessary because of the "lay of the land." The couple makes cheesecakes out of their home, and said that this move will help them to expand the business. The Bedfords said it would be 90 percent cheesecakes, but it will also be used for food prep for a food truck.

- discussed the roundabout at S.R. 98 and S.R. 164. Cheek said he is not sure about funding for the project. He hopes to have an additional update next month.

- heard from council member James Dumas who said he will be seeking re-election in the November election.

## Code enforcement officer hired in Lula

By SHERRY LEWIS

Lula City Council members look to make "sweeping changes" with the hiring of a Code Enforcer/City Marshall. His job will be to enforce the new Derelict and Blighted Property Ordinance which was discussed during a work session on Monday, July 12.

The council has hired Doug Forrester who has 27 years of experience. He has worked for Jackson County, Hall County, Helen and has helped Lula from time to time. He will start the position on July 26.

"There is a method and a means to what is allowed at the state level," city manager Dennis Bergen said. "The state ordinance is tried and true."

City Attorney Joseph Homans took the state ordinance and worked with city leaders to customize an ordinance for the city.

Bergin gave a couple of examples. If a house is derelict or the grass hasn't been cut for a long time, there will be a process for the city to handle this situation. The

property owners will first be notified and given time to handle the situation.

Grier said he believes this is how most situations will be resolved. If property owners don't take responsibility, anyone with an interest in the property will be notified before the city takes control.

Ultimately, the property owners will go before a judge. That's when the council discussed the need for a city magistrate and city solicitor. Grier explained Forrester and the courts will

have more authority with the ordinance in place.

All of the council seemed pleased about the code enforcement plans. "I am excited that we are moving in this direction," said Matt Hamby.

Grier reminded the council that this was one of the citizen concerns in previous meetings.

In other business Monday, the council:

- discussed an intergovernmental agreement with Banks County on the proposed Special Purpose

Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST) which will be voted on by citizens in November.

- heard a report from Bergin on the septic/water concerns. Bergin said things are running well, but it is almost impossible to order and receive replacement parts at this time.

- discussed one planning commission appointment that would expire at the end of the year.

- were reminded that the Lula Ladies would meet on July 28.

## Baldwin Council reappoints city officials

By SHARON HOGAN  
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City of Baldwin officials were reappointed for Fiscal Year 2022 during the monthly council meeting on Monday, July 12.

The following were approved for re-appointment from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022:

- Mayor Pro-Tem – Alice Venter
- City Clerk – Emily Woodmaster
- Deputy City Clerk – Amanda Foxgrover
- City Attorney – Dale "Bubba" Samuels with The Samuels Firm
- City Solicitor – Teresa DiPonzio
- City Judge – Robert Sneed
- City Engineer – Fletcher Holliday with Engineering Management Inc.

Also, at the monthly meeting, Mayor Joe Elam introduced the city's new

police chief, Jeff Branyon, to those in attendance.

Branyon was recently hired after the city hired a firm to handle the search for a new police chief.

### OTHER BUSINESS

In other business at Monday's meeting, the council:

- unanimously approved the Georgia Water & Wastewater Agency Response Network (G WARN) mutual aid agreement for utilities helping utilities. Woodmaster said the agencies entering into the agreement agree to work with each other in the event of a disaster to protect public health and safety and to preserve the lives and property of the people of the state. The agencies agree to furnish or exchange equipment, personnel, services and supplies and for reimbursement of costs and expenses incurred in responding to emergencies. Woodmaster

advised the city could pull out of the agreement at any time with a written letter.

- approved a bid of \$6,940 from Patrol Outfitters, Alto, to outfit the police chief's vehicle. Funding for this will come out of the speed zone cameras revenue.

- unanimously approved the FC Sanitation service agreement continuation for July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, with an automatic one-year renewal on July 1, 2022.

The service agreement continuation includes a three-percent fee increase for residential customers. The council and FC Sanitation agreed that FC would be given the first right of refusal on recycling services. Council member Stephanie Almagno said she is interested in speaking with the FC representatives about a recycling program for the city's residents. However,

in the past when the city's garbage service provider offered a recycling program there was very little participation. The FC representatives agreed to meet with city staff to discuss a recycling program and possible costs.

- approved spending an additional \$135,643 to complete the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)/Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) water tank project. Funding for the addition will come from the Habersham County Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) 6 — \$21,000, and \$114,643 from the city's system connection fees revenues. Woodmaster said the city could also anticipate the need for additional funds for the steel for the foundation, but that amount is not known at this time. When the project

was awarded to Phoenix in 2016 the cost was projected at \$1.934 million, with the additional funding approved on Monday the cost is now at \$2.132 million.

- received the following announcements: 1) Airport Road in Baldwin will be closed to thru traffic at the Railroad Underpass from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily on Monday, July 19, through Friday, July 23. 2) Registration for the first annual Runway 5K to be held on Saturday, October 23, is now open. Sponsorships are also available for the event with will include the city's annual Fall Festival and a Jeep ride. For more information on the events or to register for the 5K, contact Amanda Foxgrover at Baldwin City Hall, afoxgrover@cityof-baldwin.org or 706-778-6341, ext. 105. Registration for the 5K is also available on the city's website.



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