

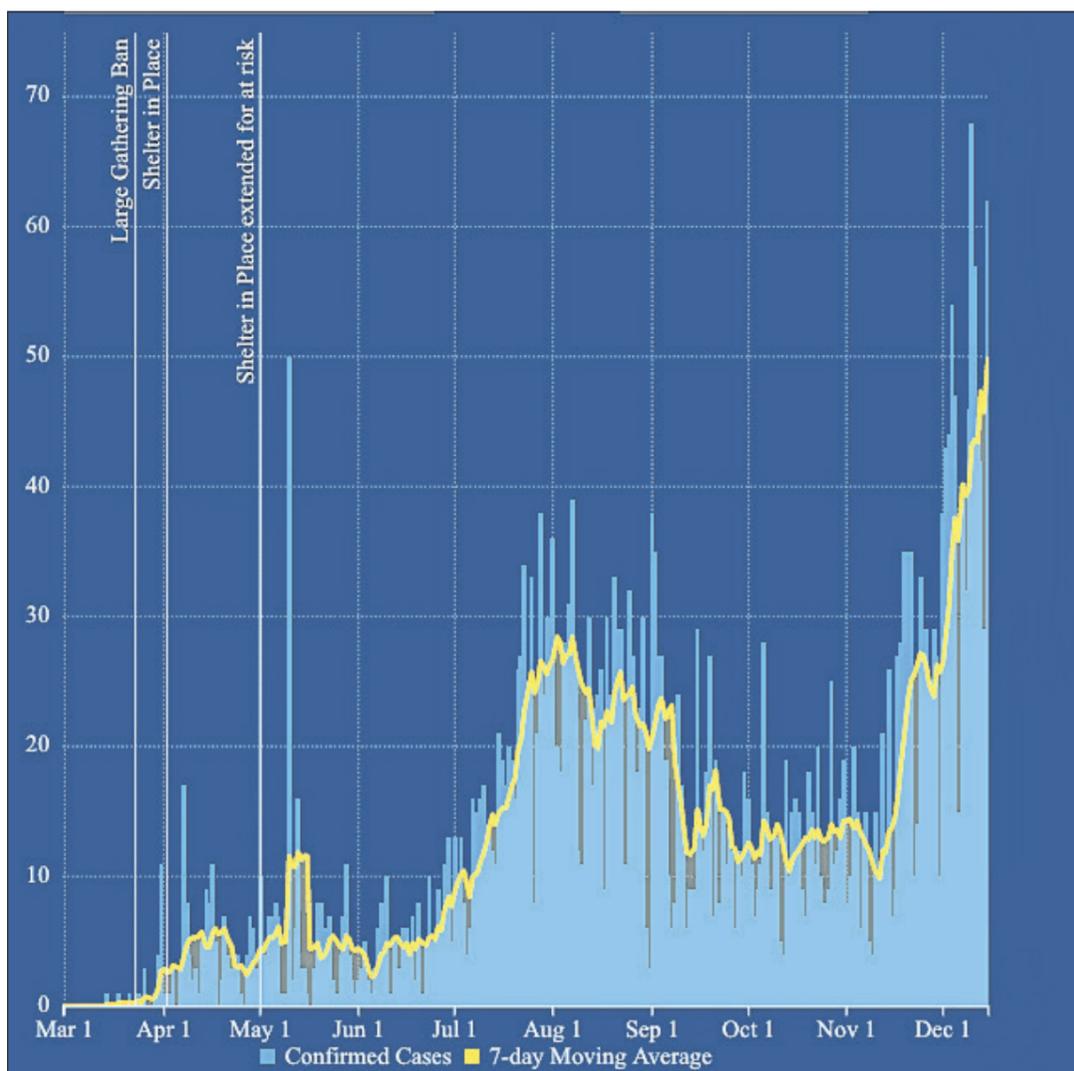
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Coronavirus spike continues



Georgia Department of Public Health

The latest trends of coronavirus in Barrow County show recent record surges and a high in the seven-day rolling average of daily cases (yellow line), as shown in this graph from the Georgia Department of Public Health.

COVID cases countywide hit record numbers; school district numbers increase sharply

By Scott Thompson
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Barrow County set a new daily high in coronavirus cases Thursday, Dec. 10 — with 68 more cases confirmed countywide by the Georgia Department of Public Health in a 24-hour period as the numbers around the state, northeast Georgia region and the U.S. continued to skyrocket. The sharply increasing case totals have pushed local hospitals to capacity and were reflected in a spike in the Barrow County School System's numbers, which led to an elementary school being closed to in-person instruction for the remainder of this week.

In its latest daily 3 p.m. update prior to press time, on Tuesday, Dec. 15, the DPH reported 4,860 confirmed cases of COVID-19, along with another 2,787 antigen cases — bringing the cumulative totals to 484,152 confirmed cases through PCR tests and 69,843 through antigen tests, also commonly known as rapid diagnostic tests. The state had a record 6,126 confirmed cases Thursday. DPH also confirmed another 35 deaths Tuesday, raising the recorded death toll to 9,250 as of the latest update.

In Barrow County, 63 more cases were reported Tuesday, raising the cumulative total in the county to

3,891 and increasing the seven-day rolling daily average to a high of 50 cases. Sixty county residents have died from COVID-19, according to the state's data. The positivity rate on tests also remained high at 21.9 percent on Tuesday with a seven-day rolling average of 20.2 percent, the highest average since the onset of the pandemic.

HOSPITALS REMAIN NEARLY FULL

And as hospitalizations have also surged, Northeast Georgia Health System is also continuing to bear the brunt of that. The system reported

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BOC rejects rezoning request for large subdivision in Statham

By Scott Thompson
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A proposed subdivision of more than 300 single-family homes in unincorporated Statham was shot down by the Barrow County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday, Dec. 8.

The board voted 5-1 — with commissioner Joe Goodman opposed to chairman Pat Graham's motion and commissioner Rolando Alvarez absent — to deny a request by Manor Restorations to rezone 95 acres at 575 Wall Rd. between State Route 316 and Atlanta Highway and change the future land-use map character designation property from Rural Reserve to 316 Innovation Corridor in order to build 318 single-family homes. Manor Restorations, which has been active in rezoning and development requests around the county in recent years, had proposed that a little more than 20 percent of the homes (67) be age-restricted to 55 years old and up.

The BOC voted 4-2 at its Nov. 11 meeting to table the request in order to get more information about sewer capacity for the proposed development but ultimately went along with the county planning staff's recommendation to deny based on the position that the request was not in keeping with the county's future land-use map.

Shane Lanham, an attorney for the applicants, has contended in public meetings that a change in land-use designation was appropriate and that the homes would complement future industry and businesses along the 316 corridor, giving prospective new workers places to live. The county planning commission did not make a recommendation on the request at its October meeting, but none of the panel's members telegraphed their support of it.

The request also drew pushback from nearby residents and the Barrow County School System, with concerns ranging from the impact on traffic and existing infrastructure, to the price point and square footage of the proposed homes, to the population impact on local schools.

The proposed development was just one of several either currently being eyed or in the works in Statham.

Similar issues, particularly regarding traffic and infrastructure and the potential impact on schools, have also been raised within the city limits of Statham, where the city council has recently considered a request by Macas Development and property owners to rezone 75.5 acres south of Atlanta Highway along Moore Drive in order to build 197 homes. The council held a public hearing on that request Dec. 3 and was scheduled to hold a vote on it at its Tuesday, Dec. 15 voting session (See barrownewsjournal.com

and the Dec. 23 edition for coverage of that meeting). Last month, the council approved the final plat for the 76-lot Lakes of Statham subdivision south of Providence Road, and building is expected to begin next year.

In another item on the Dec. 8 BOC agenda, commissioners voted for a second straight month, at the applicant's request, to table a request to rezone 18.15 acres at 725 R.D. Mack Rd. and change the property's future land-use map designation in order to build an age-restricted community with 27 single-family homes, 126 townhome/condominium units and an estimated 12-15 executive suites at the front of the proposed development. The primary applicant has requested the tabling due to health issues.

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MAILING LABEL

Little looks forward to new role as interim county manager

By Scott Thompson
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Walton County native Kevin Little chose not to seek re-election to a sixth four-year term as chairman of the county's board of commissioners this year, but he also wasn't ready to retire from a career in local government. So in October, he put out his resume to surrounding counties, including Barrow, and let it be known that he was interested in a managerial or departmental position if an opening should arise.

Such an opportunity emerged just to the east recently when Barrow County manager Mike Renshaw accepted a similar position out west, and Little was offered the interim county manager position and accepted. The board of commissioners approved the hiring of Little, effective Jan. 1, following a closed session at its Tuesday, Dec. 8 meeting and also accepted the resignation of Renshaw after more than 4 1/2 years with the county.

Renshaw's last day of work with the county will be Jan. 12, and he will then take over as general manager of the Highlands Ranch Metropolitan District in Highlands Ranch, Colorado, an unincorporated community of a little more than 100,000 people just south of Denver. The board of directors there approved the hiring of Renshaw at a Dec. 3 meeting.

As BOC chairman in Walton County over the last 20 years, Little has essentially been in a dual role as elected official and

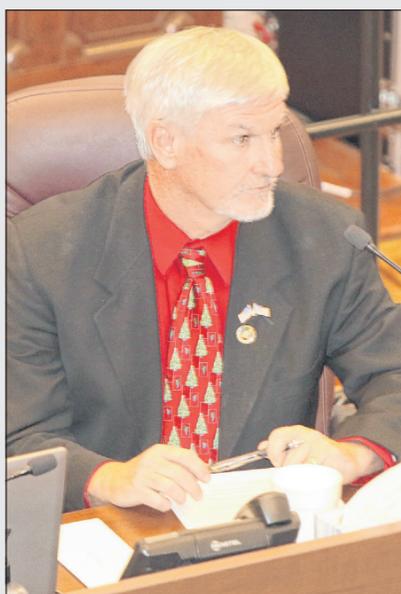


Photo courtesy David Clemons/
The Walton Tribune

Kevin Little presides over the Walton County Board of Commissioners meeting Dec. 1 in Monroe. It was the last scheduled meeting of Little's fifth and final term as chairman. He will become interim Barrow County manager starting in January.

top administrator and has held various leadership titles around Georgia and the northeast region of the state, including being a past president of the Association of

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Winder council postpones rezoning requests for properties near Hwy. 11/53 split

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The Winder City Council has postponed action on a pair of rezoning requests near the split of highways 11 and 53 in order for city staff to work with the developers on their proposed projects.

One of the requests, by Roxeywood Development and Barrow Investment Group, would be to rezone 49.4 acres at 436 Gainesville Hwy. and build a 78-home subdivision called "Stone Haven" on 42.3 of the acres. The remaining acreage would be separate commercial parcels.

The property was part of a much larger proposed development that the council shot down in 2018, when it denied a request from another developer to rezone 70 acres and build up to 220 homes.

The new request was recommended for approval by the city's planning board earlier this month, but council members did raise some concerns about traffic impact, particularly with a future shopping center anchored by Publix planned across Gainesville Highway (Highway 53).

A representative for the applicant said the developer would have to work on permitting with the Georgia Department of Transportation and estimated it would be at least year and a half before construction could begin if the request is approved.

The council also postponed a rezoning request for 1.4 acres at Jefferson Highway (Highway 11) and Amherst Drive right at the 11/53 split for a convenience store to be

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