

# Woodbine looks to the future with initiatives

There is a lot happening in Woodbine, even though the outward signs are not so obvious just yet. Through the efforts of city staff and elected officials, working in tandem with local organizations and volunteers, several projects are coming down the pipeline later this year.

Woodbine's solar plant project is featured in today's newspaper as one example of how the city is working to implement a progressive program that will lower costs and improve efficiencies well into the future.

Woodbine is among the first small cities in the state to take advantage of this financing program. Not only will the savings pay for the cost of the project, but city leaders are hoping to lower bills as well.

Citizens and visitors also will notice work starting on the Satilla Walk project, which will add educational signage and displays to the beautiful riverwalk corridor later this summer. Although treasured for years as a great place to walk, bike or relax, visitors to the pathway will also be able to learn about the history of the area and its natural environment.

In addition to grants from its partnering agencies, the city will pay for the project through the sale of surplus equipment. The Woodbine Woman's Club, Satilla River-Keeper, University of Georgia Extension Service and Bryan-Lang Historical Archives all collaborated with the city on the project, providing both direct and in-kind assistance.

As that project wraps up, Woodbine will break ground on its theater park project, which will serve as a trailhead for the riverwalk. Funded through Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax funds, the project will add another entry point to the trail where families can picnic, exercise and enjoy the outdoors.

And looking beyond 2016, the Woodbine Woman's Club continues to press for the resources to open a city library to serve the population in the south end of the county.

On the surface, Woodbine might look like a sleepy little town, but then sometimes looks can be deceiving.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## JDA funding is an investment in jobs, industry

Dear Editor,  
The article, "Camden is finally getting ready to win," in last week's Tribune & Georgian by James Coughlin of the Camden Joint Development Authority was refreshing.

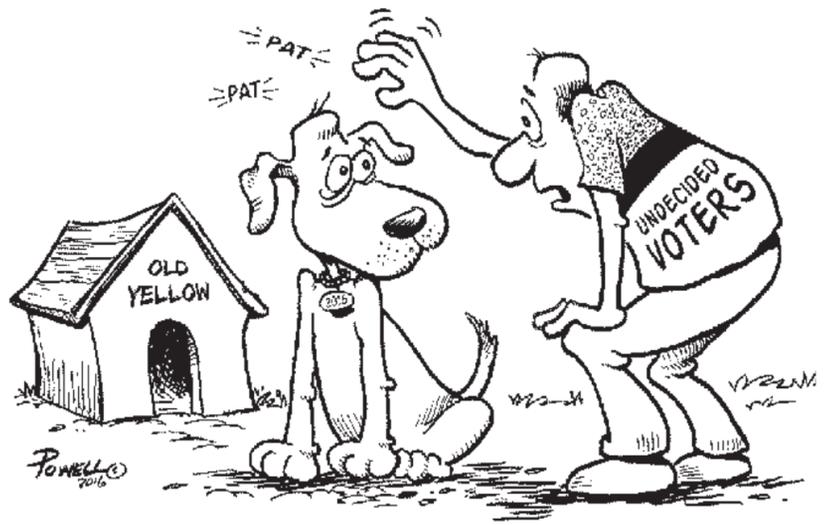
I agree 100 percent with what he said with regard to the past, present and future of economic development in Camden County.

As a native of Camden, I hate to see the economic situation that we are currently in continue whereas some of our brightest young people graduate high school, leave to add to their education and do not have the opportunity to return because of the lack of suitable employment opportunities here.

It is discouraging to see many small businesses start here with optimism and not be able to make it due to our local economy.

From 1940 until 2002, we were blessed with Gilman Paper Company (Durango) that provided a strong local economy that benefited not only their employees but the entire community, including small businesses. We were spoiled when it came to economic development and did not have to invest our tax money. Since the paper mill closed, we have seen our local economy decline to where we are today.

The investment that has been made for the last two years by our county and city governments was long overdue and needs to continue.



"Good boy! ...Have you ever thought of running for President?"

I am encouraged that our economic development team is now "in the game" and we are getting prospects to come and see what we have to offer. If we continue this investment in our local economy, we will see results that will not only provide needed jobs for our children but industry that will add to and diversify our tax base.

I encourage our county commissioners to continue to support the Joint Development Authority even more and am confident that, if we do that, we will be pleased with the results.

Jack L. Gross Sr.  
Kingsland

## July 4 festival is too hot for dogs

Dear Editor,  
It is that time of year when our residents look forward to the wonderful Independence Day festival sponsored by

the St. Marys Kiwanis Club. Most of us enjoy all the activities but wish for a cooler day.

As a member of the board for the Humane Society of Camden County, I would like to propose that citizens leave their canine friends at home. The heat can cause many problems for our furry pals. Some of these are heat exhaustion, heat stroke, dehydration and foot pad burns. Most of the area where the events take place have very little grass and mostly pavement and sidewalks. If these surfaces are too hot for your bare feet, they are too hot for your dog.

Many dogs are very susceptible to heat exhaustion and heat stroke: older dogs, dogs with health problems involving heart and breathing issues, and dogs with short snouts such as bulldogs, pugs, shih tzu and other breeds. I have seen many dogs at hot festivals

that looked like they were very uncomfortable and even suffering.

Another problem with the festivities is the fireworks. Many dogs are afraid and panic with the loud noises. Your friend will be much more comfortable at home inside, if possible. The day after July Fourth is the day animal shelters get the most runaway pets they receive all year. Most of them panicked at the loud noises and broke out of fences, etc.

Please do not leave a pet in a car when attending the festival as well as when shopping and running errands. On an 85-degree day with car windows slightly open the temperature inside will reach 102 degrees in 10 minutes, 140 degrees in 30 minutes.

Let's all have a happy and safe celebration for people and animals!

Kathie Rowland  
St. Marys

# Change is coming, watch for the barrels!

If you have reason to head to Interstate 95 via St. Marys Road, you will notice those yellow/orange barrels that symbolize a much awaited upgrade to the Interstate 95 Exit 1 entrance north at the Pilot station to improve safety for drivers and truckers who currently face hazardous conditions getting back onto I-95.

After extensive negotiations with the Georgia Department of Transportation, we have received state funding, along with some city financial investment, to install an additional lane to facilitate safer access to the freeway. Additionally, we now have submitted the request for funding to GDOT to install overhead lights that will improve safety at a location that has been a traffic hazard for years.

As an added safety measure, a new more recessed "stop bar" on Haddock Road will be installed to alert drivers who are not familiar with that dangerous intersection that they need to come to a complete stop well before the intersection as semis need extra turn space to enter the popular truck stop. Again, this is all a matter of safety and will result in a major improvement.

Am I satisfied with just an improvement? No, I am not. As I have said repeatedly in the last three years, I will continue my regular treks to Atlanta and to Jesup's regional DOT office to plead the case that the state should consider the value of marketing Exit 1 as an equally important first access to



John Morrissey  
Guest columnist

the state of Georgia from Florida just as the soon-to-be-completed expansive welcome center at mile marker 110 is upon entering Georgia from South Carolina.

Georgia is just as capable of attracting visitors headed north from Florida as it is from capturing them on their way to Florida sun and beaches. The state needs to invest money, futuristic planning and marketing into the first exit so that we can capture those millions of visitors using I-95 as their vacation navigation route.

It means completely re-designing Exit 1, providing a southern Interstate 95 Georgia Welcome Center and the signage that welcomes visitors to Georgia. It is doable and would enhance tourism not only in Camden County and St. Marys but the entire state of Georgia.

The cities and the county of Camden may be the leaders with this objective on their radar but I am confident we will eventually convince savvy state leaders that this is to the benefit of Georgia as a business and tourist

welcoming state. States to the north and south recognized long ago the tourism potential of I-95 and it is time Georgia does so as well.

## Check out downtown improvements underway

If you're driving or biking into the downtown district just past the railroad tracks, I am sure you have noticed the property improvement project underway to clean up and enhance the former mill site frontage along Osborne Street and Meeting Street. The trustee and developer are supporting the cleanup and in the process we have discovered a beautiful row of palm trees on the property that will enhance the beautification of the entire block at the entrance to our downtown area.

The front 18 acres will be included in the improvement area as we plan to present an attractive entrance to the newly rezoned area and the gateway to our historic district.

A monument sign welcoming visitors to "Historic St. Marys" is currently under design, but the good news is that we are realizing a long awaited cleanup. Prospective investors will be able to see this area as an attractive location near historic downtown and the waterfront.

## And a long-awaited project now completed

After years of delay due to budget restrictions, the residents of Gaines Davis finally have access to city water and sewer services.

It was important to those

residents that the city offer flexibility for allowing residents a reasonable timeframe to sign up for services and we agreed. We are pleased that a significant number of residents value the advantage and have now signed on to be a part of the city's excellent system. This is an important step forward in addressing our infrastructure needs.

## Looking forward

There are many projects "in the planning process" and it seemed appropriate to highlight those either near or at completion. These are not projects that grab headlines but are all projects that move our city forward. Moving forward is what we need to do in this highly competitive environment to attract new industry, new business, new residents and additional tourists.

Much of any city government is focused on keeping basic city services functioning effectively. But there is another element that is focused on looking forward and implementing projects that serve our citizens while striving to create a community environment that encourages viable new and profitable business.

Keeping our eye on the big picture is critical to both the short and long-term success of St. Marys. These are just a few examples of how we are doing both.

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# Tribune & Georgian

P.O. Box 6960 — 206 Osborne Street  
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(912) 882-4927 — Fax (912) 882-6519  
Publication Number (086-640)  
ISSN Number (1551-8353)

## OUR MISSION

The Tribune & Georgian is published with pride weekly for the people of Camden County by Community Newspapers Inc., Athens, Ga. We believe that strong newspapers build strong communities — "Newspapers get things done!" Our primary goal is to publish distinguished and profitable community-oriented newspapers. This mission will be accomplished through the teamwork of professionals dedicated to truth, integrity, loyalty, quality and hard work.

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Printed on recycled paper using soy-based ink.

**Letters policy** — Letters to the editor must include the writer's full name, street address and telephone number for verification purposes. Letters will be edited for grammar, punctuation and spelling. Writers are limited to 500 words and one letter per 20 days. Letters can be emailed to editor1@tds.net and dropped off at 206 Osborne St. in St. Marys.